

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Worship and the Generational Divide: A Study of Inclusive Worship in the Church

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

By

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**Thesis Project Approval Form**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Every generation has a different way of engaging in congregational worship, sometimes at odds with another generation. The current challenge for pastors and worship leaders of churches with multiple generations is planning worship services that consider the congregation's complex make-up and remain faithful to the principles of biblical worship. The purpose of this qualitative research project is to provide a worship model that facilitates the worship styles and preferences of multiple generations within a church congregation. An atmosphere of worship is desired for all persons attending weekly worship services whose hearts and minds are receptive to the move of God in their varied expressions of praise to Him. This thesis project examines five of seven generations worshipping together that pastors and worship leaders are responsible for ministering to: 1) Traditional (pre-1945; 2) Baby Boomers (1946-1964); 3) Generation X (Baby Busters) (1965-1980); 4) Generation Y (Millennials) (1981-1995); and 5) Generation Z (Linksters) (1996 to 2012). Data was collected from surveys of 37 participants aged 18-75 and over from various churches representing different churches. The survey consisted of open-ended and closed-ended questions. This thesis project will help worship planners establish an understanding of each generation to plan biblically and theologically grounded worship services that engage the whole congregation.

*Keywords:* multigenerational, multigenerational worship, intergenerational, intergenerational worship, blended worship

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## **List of Abbreviations**

FBLP – First Baptist Church of Lambert’s Point

FGBCFI – Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International

Gen Xer – Generation X

Gen Z – Generation Z

GMWA – Gospel Music Workshop of America

HUMC/CDOGW – Hampton University Ministers ‘Conference / Choir Directors & Organists’  
Guild Workshop

NCBC – New Calvary Baptist Church

MPBC – Mount Pleasant Baptist Church

## Chapter 1: Introduction

We live in one of the most exciting times in the history of humankind. In the last 20 years, technological and medical advances have made life simpler and healthier yet complicated in other ways, particularly in wealthy countries like the United States, Japan, Germany, and South Korea. Most people have grown accustomed to instant gratification from cooking meals within a few minutes, communicating with friends, family members, and even strangers from across the globe within a few seconds, streaming music and videos online from almost anywhere, and the ability to have a medical appointment with a doctor using smartphones, desktop computers, laptops, or tablets such as iPads. People live longer, well into their eighties, nineties, and over one hundred. With a longer lifespan, society comprises seven generations, each with distinct differences manifested in our homes, workplaces, culture, and even our places of worship.

“People with differing and competing values sit side by side in worship, as they do in all of congregational life.”<sup>1</sup> We were created to have fellowship with God and with other people. In the church, there is one body in Christ, which means we should interact for the greater good of the community and society. The greater good is violated when one group diminishes the values of another group or does not try to cultivate a harmonious relationship with groups with different viewpoints and life experiences. “Worship is the most visible and the entry point for most people into the church, so it is often the focus of change. Too often, the worship experience is only a

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<sup>1</sup> Gil Rendle, “‘Intergenerational’ as a Way of Seeing,” in *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 57, Kindle.

culture community for a few attendees.”<sup>2</sup> In worship, the faith community gathers to glorify God the Father for the redemptive work of Jesus the Son. “We experience God through each other; embracing the joy and openness of younger members while benefiting from the life-long experience of those who have been worshipping over decades.”<sup>3</sup> It is vitally essential that congregations engage in honest conversations about differing opinions among the generations about worship and the added value each group can contribute to the future of the faith. “There was a time not long ago when church leaders tried to minister to people as a single mass. No longer. Today’s church leaders understand that ministry must take place among mosaic groups and subgroups—most notably generational cohorts.”<sup>4</sup>

Worship in its most basic form is about God, for God, and offered to God as He reveals Himself to people biblically and historically. Within every human is the desire to worship someone, a deity, an object, or a thing. For Christians, the true meaning of worship involves understanding that there is one God. In Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Moses tells the Israelites, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (New International Version). Jesus repeats this in Mark 12:30. True worship requires obedience to God (1 Sam. 15:22). Vernon Whaley writes, “But true worship begins with obedience . . . because obedience is at the heart of worship. It is

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Hammett, Paul L. Anderson, and Cornell Thomas, *Reaching People Under 30 While Keeping People Over 60: Creating Community Across Generations* (Danvers, MA: Christian Board of Publication, 2015), loc 1254, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Tori Bennett Smit, "Five Best Intergenerational Practices for Small Churches" in *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches Through Intergenerational Ministry*, ed. Holly Catterton Allen (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018), 133, Kindle.

<sup>4</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2002), 9, Kindle.

worship’s very foundation.”<sup>5</sup> True worship requires an acceptance of God’s redemption through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, which was set in motion at creation (John 3:15). Jesus further shares with the Samaritan woman at the well, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). He is the Word, God in the flesh (John 1:1,14).

Worship is more than singing, clapping, and dancing during the “worship service.” “Christian worship is the outward actions and internal devotion that believers offer to the one true God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> It is both a mystery and a revelation of God. There is no scriptural definition of worship, but many scholars have provided various definitions. David Peterson writes, “There is a large vocabulary of words in Scripture that can contribute to our understanding of the whole theme or doctrine of worship.”<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that Scripture is the best source for learning about worship. Whaley provides a few biblical words.

In Scripture, the Hebrew word for worship is *shachah*, meaning “to kneel, stoop, prostrate oneself, or throw oneself down, in reverence.” Closely related are the Hebrew words *shabach*, “to shout to the Lord”; *yadah*, “to worship with uplifted hands”; *halal*, “to celebrate God foolishly and boast about His attributes (love, mercy, goodness, etc.)”; and *tehillah*, “to sing spontaneous songs of praise.” In the Greek, the word for worship, *proskuneo*, means to express deep respect or adoration—by kissing, with words, or by bowing down. Associated words include *epaineo*, “to commend or applaud”; *aineo*, “to praise God”; and *sebomai*, “to revere.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of our Response to God’s Call* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 52, Kindle.

<sup>6</sup> Constance M. Cherry, *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 19, Kindle.

<sup>7</sup> David Peterson, introduction in *Engaging with God a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 17, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Whaley, introduction in *Called to Worship*, loc 14.

The beginning of the worshiping community, comprised of people of all ages, is revealed in Exodus 5:1. “Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.’” The assumption is that the “people” refers to all the Hebrews enslaved by the Egyptians. After his eleventh appearance before Pharaoh, Moses responds to Pharaoh’s question of who the “people” were that would be going to worship the LORD. “Moses answered, ‘We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the LORD’” (Exod. 5:9). This multigenerational model of worship is found throughout the Bible.

### Ministry Context

New Calvary Baptist Church is an inner-city African American Church in Norfolk, Virginia. Organized in May 1934, New Calvary’s beginning was the result of a few church leaders and members working together to overcome a difficult financial crisis to save their church building. They chose not to relocate to a new site with members of the original congregation that started the mother church in 1879. New Calvary is within walking distance of three public housing communities, a historically African American neighborhood, a Historically Black University (Norfolk State University), and downtown Norfolk. New Calvary also manages Calvary Towers—a 112-unit apartment building for senior residents. The church has 40 ministries for members to participate in, from the Nursery Ministry to the Golden Ages Ministry, including Sunday School and weekly Bible Study. Before COVID-19 restrictions were imposed in March 2020, Sunday worship services were held at 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., except during the summer when one worship service was held at 10:00 a.m. The members of New Calvary had to adapt to using technology to stay connected to continue addressing the spiritual and physical

needs of the members and residents of the surrounding communities. Like many churches worldwide, New Calvary offered a hybrid worship service in person and online as a live stream video via social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. Bible Study was live-streamed only via Facebook, and three Sunday School classes were conducted via conference call for adults.

“The vision of New Calvary Baptist Church is to be a family of Christian believers who have been transformed to worship and serve through the liberating power of Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup> Liberation from personal sin and societal injustices are at the core of this transformation as a force of good for all people. Beginning in the mid-1960s with the third pastor, Rev. Dr. Milton Reid, New Calvary was not only known for its vibrant worship services that included sermons applicable to current times and a variety of excellent musical presentations from the music ministry that included anthems, spirituals, hymns, to gospel music but also known for championing causes for social justice. This continues with the fifth and current pastor, Rev. Dr. William Marcus Small. His philosophy is that life is a series of processes that God guides the believers through in every stage of their lives as part of the finished redemptive work of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture. Part of the process is participating in the worship service. This researcher currently serves as Minister of Music under Dr. Small’s pastorate.

Several new ministries were begun under Dr. Small’s pastorate, allowing members to participate in the worship service in new capacities. The youth were not confined to singing in the choir or serving as ushers, but they could serve as liturgical dancers, mimers, or steppers on the Step Team. Adults of all ages, including men, could participate in liturgical dance. A young

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<sup>9</sup> New Calvary Baptist Church, “Our Beliefs,” accessed February 12, 2022, <https://www.newcalvarynorfolk.org/what-we-believe/>.

adult choir, a Praise and Worship Team, and a Speech Choir were also formed. Pastor Small also introduced to New Calvary a dramatic presentation, “The Maafa Project – From Africa to America,” a multigenerational effort including members of New Calvary and guest actors representing all generations. New Calvary presented this historical and dramatic play to the Norfolk area community for three years, which concisely chronicled the journey of Africans brought from the shores of Africa to America as enslaved persons to the struggles of African Americans as free people through the Civil Rights Era. This collaborative effort was part of Pastor Small’s intentional effort to bring the generations together in worship and demonstrate to current and potential members that people of all ages are welcome to be more active in the worship experience.

When this researcher arrived at New Calvary in 2012 as the Minister of Music, the youth and teens were present with the adults in the Sunday worship service. After the congregational hymn and Praise and Worship segment, youth workers escorted the children five to twelve years of age out of the main sanctuary to participate in the children’s church in another building area. On Youth Sunday, the children would participate in the entire worship service in the choir, as the Worship Leader, as liturgical dancers or steppers, reading the announcements, and serving as ushers. As several years passed, the youth and young adult attendance declined, and their participation in the young adult choir, children’s choir, ushers, liturgical dancers, and steppers declined. Eventually, the Male Chorus and the primary adult choir were utilized on Youth Sunday and Sundays that the young adult choir was assigned to sing. Parents would escort their children to Children’s Church in the main sanctuary before the start of service. New Calvary also developed a Wednesday Teen Bible Study Group for the teenagers and created a separate worship group on Sundays. The teens would participate with the adults in the worship service



through the end of Praise and Worship, after which they would be invited to go to the Teen Room with the ministry leaders. Having an age-segregated worship service absent of youth every Sunday was not intentional. Just as New Calvary experienced a crisis in 1934, the members were able to resolve to continue worshipping as a church family. Today's challenge is working together to solve the generational gap in the church. "Faith communities are perhaps the only places where families, singles, couples, children, teens, grandparents—all generations—come together on a regular interacting basis. Yet the societal trend toward generational fragmentation has moved into churches also."<sup>10</sup>

"Churches are continually examining the meaning of worship and the value of music in worship, and universities and theological seminaries offer degrees for church musicians."<sup>11</sup> Worship is reverencing and honoring God and expressing one's love and adoration for Him. "When we worship, we are declaring God's worth."<sup>12</sup> Elements of the worship service that are not God-centered at New Calvary but are part of the entire service out of tradition, such as announcements and recognition of visitors, could be creatively included in other settings. This could be presented before and after the worship service, on the church's website, or the church's social media platforms. Pastors of Worship and Ministers of Music demonstrate the true meaning of worship through the study of Scripture, prayer, worship studies, and evaluation of music used in the worship services. They should consult regularly with the senior pastor on ways to improve the worship experience and aid members of the music ministry and the congregation in placing

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<sup>10</sup> Holley Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 30.

<sup>11</sup> Franklin M. Segler and Randall Bradley, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*. 3rd ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 108, Kindle.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

God at the center of worship through appropriate song selections. Pastors of Worship and Ministers of Music must be mindful of the congregational context but also challenge the community to sing various musical styles, especially if there is only one worship service attended by multiple generations, as it has been at New Calvary since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Constance Cherry writes, “But providing services based on diverse styles does not call the church to sing the whole church’s song—together! There is something to be said for a community that is willing to sing one another’s worship songs, even if some songs are not the personal preferences of certain individuals.”<sup>13</sup> The researcher understands that his responsibilities in his ministry context are not limited to preparing for weekly rehearsals with the choir members and musicians. “Those who lead music must not only have the technical skills of musical leadership, but also be aware of the greater implications of worship as practical theology that becomes a way of life and thus informs all choices and practices of music ministry.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Pastors of Worship and Ministers of Music must be cautious of following the latest trends in worship services. “Leaders run into trouble by trying to create worship services based on popular culture; when this happens it will not be relevant. Relevant worship is not to reproduce the popular culture in an effort to attract or entertain.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Constance M. Cherry, *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 60, Kindle.

<sup>14</sup> J. Schröder, “Academic Music Ministry Training from a Practical-Theological Perspective,” *Acta Theologica*, no. sup31 (2021): 226, [https://doi.org/10.10520/ejc-theolog\\_v2021\\_nsup31\\_a13](https://doi.org/10.10520/ejc-theolog_v2021_nsup31_a13).

<sup>15</sup> Robert Anderson, “The Development of: Traditional, Contemporary and Blended Styles of Worship Services.” (DMin diss., Order No. 3515609, Drew University, 2012), In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

### Problem Presented

The New Calvary Baptist Church members range in age from about 102 to children five years of age (great-great-grand-parents worshiping with their great-great-grand-children). They represent seven generations of people worshiping together. These generations are identified as The Greatest Generation (also called the GI Generation or The Builder Generation), The Silent Generation, The Baby Boomer Generation (also called Boomers), Generation X, The Millennial Generation, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. The boundaries of five of the generations are shown in *fig. A*, as defined by the Pew Research Center<sup>16</sup>. Generational boundaries are not listed for Builders (persons born before 1928). There is no consensus among historians on the set boundaries of each generation nor naming them. The only exception was the generally accepted date range for Baby Boomers when there was a spike in births starting in 1946, after World War II ended in 1945, through 1964. This researcher has chosen to use generational information from the Pew Research Center.

Figure A. Generations Defined (“*Removed to comply with copyright*”)

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins.” January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

“The church remains as one of the primary places for intergenerational contact in American culture. Each Sunday, the church has a unique opportunity to build bridges between generations and to encourage the expression of multiple generations in the worship of God.”<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, however, those bridge-building opportunities can be challenging, creating what can seem like insurmountable differences that become hard to overcome regarding worship styles between the different generations. “Emerging generations are increasingly being born and raised with a different philosophical set of values, a changing worldview, and an evolving belief system that generations before them did not experience.”<sup>18</sup> God never changes, and His Word never changes. Still, every generation has a different way of engaging in congregational worship of God, sometimes at odds with the previous generation. “Personal preference over issues such as song style (traditional or contemporary?), musical instruments (all, some, or none?), and approach to worship (formal? casual? liturgical? animated?) has become the basis for deliberation, debate, and division among believers.”<sup>19</sup>

The current problem and challenge at New Calvary and other churches with multiple generations is planning worship services that intentionally target every generation present while remaining faithful to the principles of biblical worship. “In most of our churches all generations are present, and we must build a ministry that includes them all.”<sup>20</sup> The old church model before the birth of GenXers was based on three generations being present in a worship service. This model included the grandparents, parents, and children. This model was also static for many

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<sup>17</sup> Ray Crawford, Jr., "For all Generations: The Experience and Expression of Intergenerational Worship" (DMin diss., Order No. 3261122, Drew University, 2007), 10.

<sup>18</sup> Dan Kimball, *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gathering for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), xi.

<sup>19</sup> Whaley, *Called to Worship*. 26, Kindle.

<sup>20</sup> McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations*, 14.

years with minimal deviation from the practices of previous generations since the children were expected to continue the worship style of their parents. “The old model of three generations which has served the church well for centuries no longer describes the society in which we find ourselves. The new reality is that six generational cohorts struggle to find appropriate roles in a society less and less defined by chronological age.”<sup>21</sup>

New Calvary is also experiencing an aging congregation, declining church attendance, and very few young adults and teenagers attending. This is not an exclusive problem to New Calvary because, throughout the United States, many churches are facing these same issues. The declining church attendance is attributable to a growing population segment identifying as “religiously unaffiliated” or “religiously none.” According to a Pew Research survey conducted in 2018 and 2019, “62% of Christians say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month, which is identical to the share who said the same in 2009. In other words, the nation’s overall rate of religious attendance is declining not because Christians are attending church less often, but rather because there are now fewer Christians as a share of the population.”<sup>22</sup> Few young adults and teenagers attend New Calvary because many are active in extra-curricular activities at their high schools or have jobs. Older teens and young adults are either away at college or may have busy college schedules if attending a local college. Another group of teens and young adults no longer desire to attend church, and their parents do not pressure them to or insist they attend. There are still opportunities for the members of New Calvary to be intentional in multigenerational worship.

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<sup>21</sup> Carroll Anne Sheppard and Nancy Burton Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections: Uniting Six Generations in the Church* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Publishing, 2011), 54, Nook.

<sup>22</sup> Pew Research Center, Oct. 17, 2019, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

### Purpose Statement

“Religious life—as with cultural values and orientation generally—is always a hybrid mix of the old and the new.”<sup>23</sup> The purpose of this thesis project, therefore, is to provide a worship model (liturgy and music) that honors the traditions of past generations while incorporating styles that are relevant for today’s generation based on the results of the qualitative study of multiple churches across several denominations and various church sizes. “One critical ongoing question to be considered is, ‘Is it possible to provide a worship experience which effectively reaches across generations and bridges the gap, not only between God and God’s people but also the generational gap to be found among God’s people themselves?’”<sup>24</sup> A theology, philosophy, and methodology of worship will also be provided as foundational for biblical worship. “When church leaders understand each generation’s values and how they were molded by events that define the generation, they can be more faithful in their use of limited resources to effectively fulfill the Great Commission.”<sup>25</sup>

### Basic Assumptions

There are three basic assumptions in this thesis project. The first is that there must be a willingness to understand each generational cohort among the different generations. Unresolved misunderstandings threaten relationship building and can cause gaps between the generations to widen. “Younger generations will avoid a church that makes them feel second class because they do not possess a long history with the congregation.”<sup>26</sup> They want to feel like they are a part of

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<sup>23</sup> Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ray Crawford, Jr., "For all Generations," 12.

<sup>25</sup> McIntosh, *One Church*, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Bob Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter, *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 19.

the church family and are not being influenced to become carbon copies of the older generations in their worship style. “Younger generations will avoid a church that primarily offers programs and ministries geared to another generation.”<sup>27</sup> This can be avoided if the church leadership intentionally includes younger people in leadership roles to voice their concerns and offer suggestions from the younger generations’ perspectives. “Older members also will feel imperiled if younger members make them feel that the traditions and procedures that mean so much to them are old-fashioned, and therefore are in danger of being eliminated.”<sup>28</sup> Some younger members are very vocal about disliking anything traditional in the church, while some older members are equally vocal about anything contemporary. As they mature as a generational cohort, every generation has values and personal preferences shaped by shared cultural events. “The challenge for the congregation is to break out of blindness to its cultural captivity and to make a genuine effort at bridging the generational gaps that already exist.”<sup>29</sup>

A second basic assumption is that pastors must connect their weekly sermons to the shared experiences of generational cohorts in the service. “At the very least, the preacher needs to know the general demographics of race, ethnicity, gender, and age if he/she hopes to speak with any relevance. It also means knowing, as much as possible, what personal and communal issues are foremost in parishioners’ minds and hearts.”<sup>30</sup> Pastors must research and become familiar with current and historical events, cultural trends, and generational characteristics. “The story of salvation history is replete with examples of generations of faith from Abraham to

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<sup>27</sup> Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 208.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Carl Wisdom, *Preaching to a Multi-generational Assembly* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 2-3.

Moses to David. Yet, from week to week we don't hear the connection between these stories and the modern stories (e.g., Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Mother Teresa). God is revealed continually through peoples of all times and places, to people of all ages and races.”<sup>31</sup>

A third basic assumption is that the focus of addressing the multigenerational gap should not be exclusively related to issues concerning the style of music used in worship. It is true that the major contributing factor to “worship wars” is music, but there are other elements of the worship service to consider. The design of the liturgy should be considered. Are there elements that could be modified, eliminated, or incorporated into another segment of the worship service, such as the reading of announcements, the acknowledgment of guests, or the collection of tithes and offerings? Can the worship service time be shortened? Some people probably are not concerned that the worship service is one and a half to two hours long. Others may prefer an hour-long service. Are there segments of the worship service that can be a digital alternative, such as online giving options? “In the Six Generation society that functions through the electronic world, chronological age has little relevance, for that world is based on performance, skills, and connections far more than on physical age.”<sup>32</sup> Utilizing youth during specific segments of the worship service should be considered or reconsidered if they were once part of it. “If children never see the inside of the sanctuary and they are never part of congregational worship, they never get the chance to see their parents, older siblings, and friends, and relatives in worship.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Wisdom, *Preaching to a Multigenerational Assembly*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Shepherd and Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections*, 54-55, Nook.

<sup>33</sup> Robert J. Keeley, “Worship and Faith Development” In *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together* ed. by Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 39, Kindle.



### Statement of Limitations

The scope of this thesis project will be limited to the study of a Christian worship service that is inclusive of multiple generations. This study will not address discipleship and what church leaders must do to change the model of winning today's generation to Christ. Dan Kimball, author of *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations*, has a different viewpoint. He writes, "Jesus gave us a mission to be his church and that is what we should build on—the mission, not the worship service."<sup>34</sup> Discipleship and making disciples are essential but require a separate study since this project does not have the resources to devote to it. This study will not include an emphasis on multiculturalism. "Nearly every congregation in America is characterized by an almost complete absence of racial and ethnic diversity. The increased sensitivity to racial dynamics and the greater consideration of musical tastes combine to produce new challenges for local church leaders."<sup>35</sup> Although the leadership of New Calvary Baptist Church realizes and discusses the importance of churches in the twenty-first century to become more culturally diverse, the demographics of the communities near New Calvary are still primarily African American urban communities. Another limitation is not focusing on all the differences between the different generations trying to find a "one size fits all" solution. "Congregations, even of the same denomination within the same community, differ from one another in their personalities, as well as in their unspoken and unwritten norm."<sup>36</sup> A final limitation was the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required most businesses and

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<sup>34</sup> Dan Kimball, *Emerging Worship: Creating New Worship Gatherings for Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 31.

<sup>35</sup> Gerardo Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2012), 4, Kindle.

<sup>36</sup> Howard Vanderwell, "A New Issue for A New Day," in *The Church of All Ages: Generational Worshiping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute. 2008), 12, Kindle.

institutions to be closed and millions of Americans to stay home during the research conducted for this thesis project. The researcher could not conduct onsite interviews with members of New Calvary or distribute surveys to potential study participants in person.

### Delimitations

A delimitation of this thesis project may be the integrity of survey or questionnaire data from the members of the churches to be surveyed being skewed because of biases people may have against the preferences of another generation. “While we may hear of many generalizations, we must be wary of stereotypes that fail to do justice to the uniqueness of each generation.”<sup>37</sup> Another delimitation is the pastor or other church leaders not allowing the researcher to conduct interviews onsite to accommodate interviewees. Another delimitation may be the timely return of mailed and faxed surveys or questionnaires.

### Definitions

**Cohort:** “a term demographers use to describe those born within a certain period. It also is used by marketers to describe those who have certain characteristics in common, as well as shared birth years.”<sup>38</sup>

**Cohort-group:** “any wider set of persons born in a limited span of consecutive years.”<sup>39</sup>

**Cross-generational:** two or more generations where “there is some sharing, listening, and learning, but little individual or collective transformation.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Vanderwell, “A New Issue for a New Day, 12, Kindle.

<sup>38</sup> Sheppard and Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections*, 7, Nook.

<sup>39</sup> William Straus and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1991), 44.

<sup>40</sup> Holly Catterton Allen and Chris Barnett, “Addressing the Two Intergenerational Questions,” in *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, ed. Holly Catterton Allen (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018), 18, Kindle.

**Generation:** all the people born during a specific period (generally spanning about 20-22 years), experiencing the same historical events.

**Intergenerational:** interaction between two or more generations in a group or organization where “there is comprehensive *mutuality, equality, and reciprocity* that makes individual or collective transformation more likely.”<sup>41</sup>

**Multigenerational:** two or more generations that are part of a group or organization where the focus is not on intentional interaction between the different generations but on understanding the needs of each generation to serve them better.

**Postmodern:** a period that began in the 1960s with the Cultural Revolution.

### Thesis

Change is an inevitable forward-moving process in humans’ life cycle, affecting every area of human activity socially, culturally, politically, and religiously and interspersed with the varying prefaces of multiple generations. Although marketers specialize in segmenting the different generations to meet specific business goals, the Christian Church remains one of the last institutions where all generations can gather together in worship as a unified group. It is not a perfect gathering but one that must intentionally embody what it means to be “one body in Christ.” “The church’s move toward separate worship services, however, has facilitated a separation within worship that is largely due to generational boundaries.”<sup>42</sup> Worship encompasses a relational encounter with God, initiated by God, with the individual. Generational division can be mended when the generations within a congregation create a culture that embraces a healthy relationship so that everyone can feel included in worship. “Worship must,

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<sup>41</sup> Allen and Barnett, “Addressing the Two Intergenerational Questions,” 18, Kindle.

<sup>42</sup> Crawford, “For all Generations,” 10.

by its nature, be an inclusive act. It must provide genuine worship opportunities for all of God's gathered people.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Segler and Bradley, preface to *Christian Worship*, loc 83, Kindle.

## Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Human interaction is an essential part of every person's life cycle, and without it, the entire human experience is never really actualized or can be fully appreciated. As people connect, their shared experiences help create a sense of community needed in any healthy relationship. This sense of community is necessary for society and sometimes essential in the church, where multiple generations are present in a worshiping community. In his book, *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, Howard Vanderwell writes, “While there is no greater privilege than the Christian practice of worshiping God, we believe there is no better way to do that than as an intergenerational community in which all are important, all celebrate, all communicate, and all encourage and nurture the faith of others.”<sup>44</sup> People’s differences can benefit the growth and development of a healthy congregation; however, differences can also threaten a congregation's health when any individual or group refuses to engage in discovering commonality.

This chapter covers three sections that address the commonalities and differences of multiple generations. The first section reviews current literature related to worship and the multigenerational divide. “Too many churches and parachurch organizations know too little about the similarities and differences among the three largest generations that make up the American populace today, and they often suffer because of it.”<sup>45</sup> This is also true of the smaller generations, including the older Traditionalists (i.e., GI and Silent Generations) and the younger Post-Millennials (Generation Z). The second section covers the theological foundations for

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<sup>44</sup> Howard Vanderwell, preface in *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, Edited by Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), loc 294-304, Kindle.

<sup>45</sup> Elisabeth A. Nesbit Sbanotto and Craig L. Blomberg, *Effective Generational Ministry: Biblical and Practical Insights for Transforming Church Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), loc 75, Kindle.

multigenerational worship in the Old and New Testaments. The third section covers the theoretical foundations of multigenerational worship.

## Literature Review

### Scholarly Books

In his book, *Putting an End to Worship Wars—Understanding: Why People Disagree Over Worship; The Six Basic Worship Styles; How to Find Balance and Make Peace*, Elmer Towns discusses in detail what he describes as six “worship paradigms” or styles of worship. He identifies them as Evangelistic, Bible Expositional, Renewal, Body Life, Liturgical, and Congregational.<sup>46</sup> He does not focus on the methodology of worship as the driving force behind disagreements about worship. Nor is he trying to persuade churches to change their worship format. He associates these styles with a particular denomination but suggests that a singular church may exhibit more than one of these worship styles. Dr. Towns also examines the dynamics of worship wars, identifying contention areas and advocates returning to the biblical foundations of worship. The book is useful to the researcher because Dr. Towns explores reasons for conflicts over worship formats.

Vernon M. Whaley examines a higher purpose of human existence in his book, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God’s Call.*” It is a purpose not lived out unto itself but a purpose that is God-centered worship. Whaley writes, “Down through the centuries, men and women have been on a quest to know God, to feel His presence, to

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<sup>46</sup> Elmer Towns, *Putting An End to Worship Wars – Understanding: Why People Disagree Over Worship, The Six Basic Worship Styles, How To Find Balance and Make Peace* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), loc 898, Kindle.

experience a relationship that transcends time and understanding.”<sup>47</sup> God reveals Himself to humans and seeks to maintain a loving relationship with those created in His image. Whaley explains that this relationship was initiated by God at creation, continued by Him through the end of time, and maintained by Him through eternity. Whaley explores the biblical understanding and principles of worship from Genesis to Revelations in his three-part book. He provides detailed descriptions of worship in the Old Testament, New Testament, and heaven as written in Revelations. Christians must commit to reading the Bible to grow in their relationship with God and have “meaningful worship” with Him.

In chapter 3, Whaley pauses to discuss the start of worship wars. It is not a new phenomenon experienced in churches today. Whaley writes, “The worship battles we face today are often driven by self-interest. Unwilling to accept new, exciting venues for the expression of worship, many folks just stir up conflict.”<sup>48</sup> Most people do not intentionally contribute to division in the worship service. It is a matter of learning about and understanding the differences between the generations and working towards a mutual solution. Personal preferences such as worship and musical styles are often sources of contention in the church. Whaley writes, “Such personal preferences result in disagreement between brothers and sisters, pastors and parishioners, and their differences of opinion prohibit their worship of God.”<sup>49</sup> This book is useful to the researcher because Dr. Whaley provides a biblical basis for worship in the Old and New Testaments.

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<sup>47</sup> Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God's Call* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 18, Kindle.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

David Kinnamon's book, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church... And Rethinking Faith*, is about Millennials being disengaged and disconnected from the church. This three-part book is based on research conducted by the Barna Group between 2007 and 2011 among 18- to 29-year-olds. In part one of the book, Kinnamon describes three types of dropouts, listing them as “nomads,” “prodigals,” and “exiles.”<sup>50</sup> He helps the readers identify the challenges Millennials experience with Christianity and what makes this generation's wrestling with their faith different from previous generations. He writes, “The problem is not that this generation has been less church-ed than children and teens before them; the problem is that much spiritual energy fades away during a crucial decade of life—the twenties.”<sup>51</sup> In the book's second part, Kinnamon explores six broad reasons that young adults feel disconnected from the church. Church leaders must recognize these disconnections and formulate strategies to address the issues. In the book's third part, Kinnamon provides practical suggestions for church leaders to consider in reconnecting with young adults so that they feel welcomed and included. This book is useful to the researcher because the author explains the cultural context of young adults to bridge generational gaps.

Jason Gardner examines the causes of gaps between the different generations in the church in his book *Mend the Gap: Can the Church Reconnect the Generations?* He acknowledges that there have always been differences between parents and their children. “In many ways the conflict between young and old seems to be a repetitive cycle: generations of

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<sup>50</sup> David Kinnamon and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...And Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 25, Kindle.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.



parents will visit upon their offspring the battles they fought with their own parents. . .”<sup>52</sup> The issue is that the rate of change of differences in recent times is occurring too fast for older generations to keep pace with the younger generations, thus creating a disconnect. Gardner also examines the depth of this disconnect or gap to determine what, if anything, can be done to bring the generations closer. Gardner’s book is useful to the researcher because he explains some causes of generational gaps and provides recommended solutions that churches can adapt to their ministry contexts.

As the editor of *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, Howard Vanderwell and eight contributing writers address the concept of intergenerational worship. Each writer approaches this concept from different ministry contexts. However, their commonality is encouraging church leaders to plan strategically to strengthen the congregation's worship life. The book reveals that a healthy church includes honest and open dialogue among the congregants about worship styles and a willingness to embrace intergenerational practices. Understanding how the shift from intergenerational worship started and became the norm will help decide what action worship planners must undertake to move the congregation from personal preferences to biblical standards, which is challenging for any church. The book is useful to the researcher because of its overarching theme of each generation's importance in creating community together through corporate worship.

Cory Siebel is the editor of *Engage All Generations: A Strategic Toolkit for Creating Intergenerational Faith Communities*. This book is a collection of writings from several presenters who attended the 2019 InterGenerate Conference at Lipscomb University in

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<sup>52</sup> Jason Gardner, *Mend the Gap: Can the Church Reconnect the Generations?* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 11.

Nashville. The writers provide their perspectives on how churches with multiple generations can become a more intergenerational faith community. Valerie M. Grissom writes, “If intergenerational values are to be promoted, the Church must recognize that all people, regardless of age, are participants in the Body of Christ.”<sup>53</sup> The book is comprised of three sections. Part one provides a biblical and theological foundation for intergenerationality that correlates to the church’s mission and core values and helps members learn and grow together in their faith journey. In part two, the writers explore intergenerational connections in worship, milestone celebrations in a person’s faith journey, and board games. As it relates to board games, James Brian Santos writes, “Believe it or not, hundreds of new games are being published every year, and scores of them are perfect for enabling multiple generations to intersect.”<sup>54</sup> In part three, the focus is on leadership development and its importance in changing the culture within the church that should be countercultural to secular society. This requires work, commitment, and prayer. The writers challenge leadership to encourage the members to use common language to develop healthy relationships and to share their common experiences. This book is useful to the researcher because the writers provide practical strategies and relevant stories for intergenerational ministries.

The pursuit of church growth can sometimes occur at the expense of intergenerational cohesion. As a former pastor of several churches that experienced congregational transition, William J. Smith, Jr. presents a model he has used that rejects the “either-or” option in support of

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<sup>53</sup> Valerie M. Grissom, “Spiritual Formation Through Intergenerational Scripture Presentation,” in *Engage All Generations: A Strategic Toolkit for Creating Intergenerational Faith Communities*, ed. Cory Seibel (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2021), 106, Kindle.

<sup>54</sup> James Brian Santos, “Intergenerational Connections Through Tabletop Gaming,” in *Engage All Generations: A Strategic Toolkit for Creating Intergenerational Faith Communities*, ed. Cory Seibel (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2021), 169, Kindle.

the “both-and” option. In his book, *Under One Roof: Building an Intergenerational Church*, Smith suggests that the success of his proposed model is dependent on educating church leaders to recognize the societal norms, traditions, and values of each generation and using that knowledge to build mutual respect and appreciation across all generations. He writes, “The problem is not that multiple generations exist, but that our programming and way to minister has not changed, ignoring the reality that different generations have growing needs and differ in their attraction to the church.”<sup>55</sup> The book is useful to the researcher because it provides a practical approach to engaging all generations as one unified church body and provides a consistent theoretical foundation for intergenerational ministry in each chapter.

In *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, and the Future is Bright*, Haydn Shaw argues that the church's future is a positive one. Shaw offers a practical solution to the worldwide decline of attendance in many churches, generational clashes contributing to church splits, and the younger generations being noticeably absent. Common ground is possible when generational differences are identified, examined, and addressed. The book is useful to the researcher because the author provides an in-depth analysis of how the time in which people were born, historical events, and culture shaped each generation, which also contributes to how their relationship with God was shaped.

Franklin M. Segler and Randall Bradley expand on the relationship with God in the book *Christian Worship – Its Theology and Practice – 3rd Edition*. This three-part book offers a multilayered approach to the subject of Christian worship and serves as a useful guide to persons who plan worship services in their respective churches. In part one, Segler and Bradley define

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<sup>55</sup> William J. Smith, Jr., *Under One Roof: Building an Intergenerational Church* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2016), loc 386-397, Kindle.

and explain worship biblically, examine how worship has evolved historically, and provide a perspective on worship in the postmodern era. In part two, Segler and Bradley explain how people express their attitudes toward God in the worship service, including through music, prayer, Scripture reading, preaching, giving, the arts, the Lord's Supper, and baptism. They included a chapter on children in worship in this section. They write, "The worship of God should be intergenerational; it should be experienced by the entire congregation. Therefore, the children should certainly be included."<sup>56</sup> In part three, Segler and Bradley examine the importance of planning the worship service. They write, "Since worship is offered to God, it demands our best in preparation, leadership, and participation. Above all else, the spirit of worship must be genuine."<sup>57</sup> The book is useful to the researcher because the authors provide biblical and historical research on Christian worship.

Daniel I. Block is thorough in his writing on worship in his book, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*. This exhaustive work explores the biblical foundation of worship and a study of worship in ancient Israel. Block references Scripture throughout his book to explain the worship practices and principles of the Jewish people. When citing Scripture throughout the book, Block sometimes includes the Greek and Hebrew of some words related to worship and defines the literal meaning to help today's readers know what sense of the word is used. "The key to understanding the content of Block's book is recognizing the framework of most of the chapters. He provides a theological perspective on worship elements as they relate to the First Testament, compares it with the practices in the New Testament, and

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<sup>56</sup> Segler and Bradley, *Christian Worship*, 159, Kindle.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

then explores the practical application for the modern church.”<sup>58</sup> Block refers to the Old Testament as the First Testament. This book is useful to the researcher because of the author’s detailed biblical explanation of worship and the practical application examples.

### **Journal Articles**

Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross discuss how age-segregated schooling in society influenced age-graded Sunday school in their journal article, “Why Churches Tend to Separate the Generations.” They attribute this, along with other factors such as individualism and secular educational models, to separating the generations in the worship service. Church growth strategists suggest that Christians have also unintentionally created the generations’ systematic separation by being influenced by culture. Allen and Ross assess how ministry leaders considered developmental differences between children through senior adults and life-stage concerns. “Thus, churches moving toward more educational model of worship (and away from a spiritual model) viewed separating children from the adults during the worship service as a benefit for the children.”<sup>59</sup> This article is useful to the researcher because it describes how the American culture's individualistic nature infiltrated the church, where different worship services were created to satisfy the congregants’ worship preferences.

Allen addresses age-segregation and intergenerational issues in her earlier article, “Bringing the Generations Together: Support from Learning Theory.” She points out that there is a need for more scholarly work that addresses the theory of all ages being together and intergenerational learning. The writings of scholars such as Allen Harkness and Catherine

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<sup>58</sup> Willie Moody, “4-MAT Book Review on Daniel I. Block’s *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*” (class paper submitted in WRSP 835 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2017).

<sup>59</sup> Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, “Why Churches Tend to Separate the Generations.” *The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 3, no. 2 (2013): 10.

Stonehouse provide biblical support for all generations being together. Holly Catterton Allen identifies several other prominent scholars whose works from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s are foundational to what is known today as “Intergenerational Christian Education” or “Intergenerational Christian Experience” (IGCE). She writes, “Intergenerational Christian experiences have been studied in a variety of settings, though most of the research offers primarily soft data. Anecdotal and observational data is quite supporting and encouraging. . .”<sup>60</sup> Allen’s background is in educational psychology, and she uses “situative/sociocultural perspective” to further examine the intergenerational faith community. She based her 2002 dissertation on the work of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), whose own work was on the learning and development of children. Allen writes, “As loving church leaders diligently seek to build communities of faith that help children come to know God, many are re-evaluating the current common practice of separating the generations for worship, Bible study, and ministry.”<sup>61</sup> She offers six suggestions and five intergenerational activities to facilitate this effort. This article is useful to the researcher because the author explains the biblical, theoretical, and social support for generations together.

Creating space for multiple generations to worship together can be challenging, but having a language barrier is an additional challenge for bilingual congregational leaders. John Yu addresses this in his article “Bilingual, Intergenerational Worship and Ministry for Unity.” Yu conducted a six-month project studying first- and second-generation Korean American Christians at his True Light Community Church in Aurora (TLCC), Colorado. True Light had worship

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<sup>60</sup> Holly Catterton Allen, "Bringing the Generations Together: Support from Learning Theory." *Christian Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (Fall, 2005): 321.  
<https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/bringing-generations-together-support-learning/docview/205416059/se-2>.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

services in English and one in Korean. Yu writes, “The intent of having multiple services was to serve the different needs of each group. Each group can worship in an age-appropriate setting with the language they are most comfortable with.”<sup>62</sup> The church was experiencing a language gap and a generational gap. Among his assessment of Korean American churches is the need to carefully plan worship services and ministries to bridge these gaps and consistently apply what works best in a church context. During these six months, TLCC had one bilingual worship service per month. One barrier to a meaningful worship experience was using an interpreter for both English and Korean-speaking members during the service. Yu suggests using non-verbal communication through video, music, and the arts instead of the sermon as one solution to this issue. This researcher disagrees with this recommendation because it is not supported scripturally. However, the researcher agrees that they can be used as a supplement to the sermon. God spoke directly to an individual or used individuals or angels to convey His message to people.

Yu reports that people will worship in settings where they feel most comfortable, including being around others in the same age group or who like the same worship style. After giving historical context to the Korean American community, Yu provides a theological framework for achieving unity, citing several Scriptures and emphasizing Ephesians 2:19-20. He writes, “Even though Christ has already achieved unity amongst the believers, Christians have not yet lived into that reality completely. It requires continued efforts, in working out one’s salvation, to live into this reality.”<sup>63</sup> When there are gaps among the members, whether language, generational, or cultural, people should not have a defeatist mindset where they make the

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<sup>62</sup> John Yu, "Bilingual, Intergenerational Worship and Ministry for Unity" *Religions* 13, no. 4:287 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040287>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

problem bigger than the solution. Yu explains that unity is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). This article is useful to the researcher because the author explains divisive issues applicable to any Christian church and offers biblical and practical solutions to minimize or overcome generational and language differences.

Do the youth understand corporate worship dynamics when they only experience “children’s church” or “youth church?” Dave Wright attempts to answer this question in his journal article, “Equipping the Generations: Don’t Segregate the Youth.” He points out that when they are rarely part of the entire worship service with the adults, children are not fully exposed to what is occurring to understand or be engaged in worship as adults. Youth lose opportunities to worship with a diverse group of adults in their separate services. Wright does not suggest that churches do away with youth church, but having youth activities should not replace a time of gathering with the adults. “Then and only then can we model and shape a biblical view of the church as we entrust the faith from one generation to the next.”<sup>64</sup> This article is useful to the researcher because the author provides compelling reasons for including youth in worship service with adults.

The researcher included information from a qualitative research study conducted by Bencsik Andrea, Horváth-Csikós Gabriella, and Juhász Tímea in this thesis paper as a resource applicable to the study of multigenerational worship. Their findings were presented in their journal article, “Y and Z Generations at Workplaces.” The authors introduced a new term, intergenerational management, which is similar to intergenerational worship but applies to the workplace. Although this research study focuses on the workplace habits of generations Y and

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<sup>64</sup> Dave Wright, "Equipping the Generations: Don't Segregate the Youth." *The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 4, no. 1 (September 2013): 57.



Z, it provides characteristic descriptions of the Boomers and Generations X, Y, and Z. Different generational characteristics are presented in three tables in the research study. With multiple generations in the workplace, the authors suggest that the generations must cooperate and share knowledge. “Therefore it is important to encourage people to transfer knowledge and to build trust.”<sup>65</sup> The authors reveal that cooperation and the flow of information are successful when each generation's communication style is understood.

Gordon T. Smith advocates for the church to be intentional in being a multigenerational community in worship, learning/teaching, and mission in his journal article, “Generation to Generation: Inter-Generationality and Spiritual Formation in Christian Community.” Faith formation depends on each generation being present together so that the cycle of passing on God's wisdom continues from generation to generation. Generational division threatens the transfer of faith values, and Smith points out that inter-generationality is not represented by having separate services tailored for a specific generation. He does not suggest that churches no longer provide opportunities for the members to participate in generational-specific settings. But he suggests “that age specific activities in the life of the church, however suitable, cannot ever be the only way in which we engage the life of the faith community.”<sup>66</sup> This article is useful to the researcher because Smith uses Scripture and social-psychologist research findings to support his position that the church should be a multi-generational community.

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<sup>65</sup> Bencsik Andrea, Horváth-Csikós Gabriella, and Juhász Tímea, “Y and Z Generations at Workplaces.” *Journal of Competitiveness* 8, no. 3 (September 2016): 90, DOI:10.7441/joc.2016.03.06.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon T. Smith, “Generation to Generation: Inter-Generationality and Spiritual Formation in Christian Community.” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* Vol. 10, No. 2, (2017): 190.

## Dissertations and Theses

Phillip Lee examines the development and growth of worship from the Old Testament through post-modern times to address South Korean churches' worship challenges. In his thesis, "Blended Worship: A Future Model of Worship for the Presbyterian Churches in South Korea," Lee identifies the conflict over worship styles among younger and older generations as one significant issue churches experience. The conflict was causing splits in the faith community, but prejudices against the different worship styles should not cause churches to split. Lee believes blended worship is a starting point to ease the worship conflict in South Korea, especially within the Presbyterian church. "Blended worship, however, is not an aggregation of worship formats. It is a guide, on the biblical basis, to bring worshipers closer to the future worship in heaven."<sup>67</sup>

The church is where everyone should feel a part of a community, but some segments feel alienated. Jon Paul Lepinski highlights this in his thesis, "Engaging Postmoderns in Worship: A Study of Effective Techniques and Methods Utilized by Two Growing Churches in Northern California." "Young Worshipers are noticeably absent in worship services, leaving many church congregations looking more like convalescent homes than vibrant, healthy church families where multi-generational community, discipleship, and teaching occurs."<sup>68</sup> The decline in church attendance is partly attributed to the neglect or misunderstanding of effectively engaging the younger generations in the worship service. Lepinski studied two California churches that were successful in engaging postmodern worshippers. He proposes several methodologies these

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<sup>67</sup> Philip Lee, "Blended Worship: A Future Model of Worship for the Presbyterian Churches in South Korea" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2014, 137), <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/850>.

<sup>68</sup> Jon Paul Lepinski, "Engaging Postmoderns in Worship: A Study of Effective Techniques and Methods Utilized by Two Growing Churches in Northern California." (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2010) 97, <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/332>.

churches use as models to follow but cautions that these methods may not necessarily apply to other geographic locations.

Robin R. Rezek expands the discussion of young worshipers being present in the worship service in her dissertation, "Young Children in Worship." She asserts that having children baptized makes them members of the Christian family. Worship is for the Christian family, and children must be present in corporate worship. She asks, "How can they be expected to understand, appreciate, and participate fully in worship as they come of age if they have not been allowed the opportunity to observe the worshipful behavior of more mature believers?"<sup>69</sup>

Through her research of children ages five through nine, Rezek concludes that they can express their feelings about the worship service and the connection they feel with God. The parents were also part of the research but were asked not to influence the children's responses to the survey questions. Her study revealed that children are attentive and keenly aware of what happens during the worship service when they can be participants, especially when they are included in the pastor's sermons. She does not argue for eliminating age-segmentation in the church. There are times when it is needed for cognitive and spiritual development. Rezek explains that there must be, however, a level of expectation for the children to be in corporate worship and be able to participate. This thesis is useful to the researcher because the author advocates for children in corporate worship.

Michael E. McCrary's research is focused on multiple generations in a church in his dissertation, "Intentional Intergenerational Ministry Practices Discovered at Central Assembly of God in Springfield, Missouri." He writes, "The Church is the whole family of God. However,

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<sup>69</sup> Robin R. Rezek, "Young Children in Worship." (DMin diss., Concordia University Chicago, 2013) 8, In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1449160263?accountid=12085>.

many church leaders experience frustration when they try to minister to all generations. Some leaders believe that a church cannot effectively minister to all generations.”<sup>70</sup> He provides extensive biblical and historical information on the family dynamic in the Old and New Testaments in support of intergenerational ministry. This family dynamic is crucial for understanding God’s intended purpose for generations to be together. The church's challenge is age-segregation in Christian education and trying to meet the needs of an aging congregation. They both can be counter-productive to an intergenerational ministry if there is no opportunity for interaction between the generations.

McCrary acknowledges that there may be tension and misunderstanding among the generations, and he provides an overview of five generations—the GI Generation, Silent Generation, Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials—to help church leaders minister to a diverse congregation. He writes, “By understanding the influences on each generation, church leaders can begin to understand why some generational tensions exist.”<sup>71</sup> McCrary develops five best practices from his research that will aid churches in intentionally developing a successful intergenerational ministry. They include having “engaged parents,” “strategic mentors,” “blended services,” “serving opportunities,” and “faith-building stories.”<sup>72</sup> This dissertation is useful to the researcher because of the author’s biblical support of intergenerational ministry and his use of generational theory to explain generational characteristics.

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<sup>70</sup> Michael McCrary, "Intentional Intergenerational Ministry Practices Discovered at Central Assembly of God in Springfield, Missouri." Order No. 3617857, (DMin diss. Adelphi University, 2014), 2, In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/intentional-intergenerational-ministry-practices/docview/1528555543/se-2>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 83.

What is appropriate and appreciative music for the worship service? This is a question that Monty Boyd McGee tries to answer in his thesis, "Serving the Body of Christ in Corporate Worship: An Apologetic for Embracing Multiple Styles of Music." Today, the debate over musical styles suitable for worship is not new. Nevertheless, it is the cause and has been the cause of much contention in the church, pitting younger generations against older generations. McGee explains that worship has always endured a cycle of change where what was once new was replaced by something new. He states that "history demonstrates that when Christians can lay aside personal preferences and self-seeking agendas, focusing instead on outward flowing ministry to each other and the world, God is glorified, and his Kingdom is advanced."<sup>73</sup> The thesis is useful to the researcher because the author discusses the need for biblical worship. Additionally, the author explores arguments for and against the use of multiple styles of music in worship.

Peter Walter Rehwaldt views multigenerational worship from a different perspective than most other authors on this topic in his dissertation, "Let All the People Say 'Amen': A Multigenerational Understanding of Rite, Hymnody, And Preaching." He suggests that there are multigenerational gaps. However, there are also developmental gaps, even among people in the same generation. His writing is in the Catholic, Episcopal, and Lutheran contexts because he states that their worship is mainly multigenerational. Rehwaldt writes extensively on these three church entities' rites, hymnody, and preaching and how each shapes multigenerational worship. "The rites of the church are generally fixed. . .the hymns for the church offer more

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<sup>73</sup> Monty Boyd McGee, "Serving the Body of Christ in Corporate Worship: An Apologetic for Embracing Multiple Styles of Music" (DMin thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 71, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2081020969?accountid=12085>.

flexibility...The sermon offers the most flexibility.”<sup>74</sup> This thesis is useful to the researcher because the author gives careful attention to developmental differences that other writings consulted for this thesis.

### Theological Foundations

Worship is the Christian’s response to a holy God, the giver and the sustainer of life. Multigenerational worship is a concept that has existed for thousands of years, as evidenced in the Bible. Every week, millions of Christians gather together in their respective churches as a corporate body to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. They recognize His redemptive work through Jesus Christ. They pray, sing, listen to sermons, take Communion together, and witness new converts’ baptisms. In other words, they gather together to worship. This “togetherness” seems conducive to a healthy worshiping congregation. However, “diversity abounds: the generations have been formed differently, think differently, practice different methods of communication, and often desire widely different worship practices.”<sup>75</sup> The researcher selected the scriptural passages in this section to trace references in the Old Testament and New Testament that support multigenerational worship.

### Old Testament

Moses introduced the multigenerational concept in Exodus 10:8-9. “Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. ‘Go, worship the LORD your God,’ he said, ‘But tell me who will be going.’ Moses answered, ‘We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Walter Rehwaldt, "Let all the People Say “Amen.”: A Multigenerational Understanding of Rite, Hymnody, and Preaching" (DMin diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2005), 176, In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/304999739?accountid=12085>.

<sup>75</sup> Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, Loc 282, Kindle.

our daughters and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the LORD.” No matter how young, no Israelite was to be excluded from worshiping God together as one community. “Thus worship was not merely about giving sacrifices, involving the men alone. It was about a ‘festival,’ a joyous celebration of fellowship with the good Creator. That kind of worship was for everyone.”<sup>76</sup>

Moses and the Israelites were at Mount Sinai, where the LORD confirmed His covenant with them, and all the people were present at the foot of the mountain to witness the burnt offerings and share in the fellowship offerings in Exodus 24:1-8. This passage of Scripture does not differentiate between men, women, and children, but the word “people” infers that all generations are present. “Such vivid reminders helped the Israelites keep in mind the source and nature of their forgiveness and acceptance: God and his grace (as he allows the slain animal to substitute for the sinner, based on the eventual perfect sacrifice of Christ to which all OT sacrifices point and upon which all OT sacrifices depend for their ultimate validity).”<sup>77</sup>

Other Old Testament Scriptures explicitly identify who the “people” or “assembly” are during a gathering. In Deuteronomy 29:10-15, the LORD renews His Covenant with the Israelites. “The assembly gathered here is described with unusual fullness—the leaders, the ordinary citizens, wives and children, and resident aliens. The entire believing community was invited to enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord without reference to social, economic, gender, or age differences.”<sup>78</sup> Here at Horeb, God renewed his covenant with the Israelites,

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<sup>76</sup>Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, vol. 1* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 360.

<sup>77</sup>Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus, vol. 2, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 554.

<sup>78</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy, vol. 4, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 378.

passed from one generation to the next, that He made with them in Moab through Moses so that everyone would hear the same laws of God at the same time.

In Deuteronomy 31:9-13, Moses again gathers the people together for a public reading of the law given to him by the LORD. “Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law” (Deut. 31:12). Having the children present during these times of public gathering ensured that they were instructed in the laws of God and that the laws were passed down from generation to generation. These times “of public reading would take place at the worship center—that is, the place the LORD would choose (31:11; cf. 12:4–7). All must assemble there and listen intently to all the provisions and mandates of the covenant (31:12). Faithful adherence to this requirement would ensure that unborn generations of Israelites would hear the word of God. . .”<sup>79</sup> “All” was inclusive of men, women, and children.

This assembly of all the people was repeated in Joshua 8:33-35. A new generation of Israelites was gathered at Mount Ebal to renew the covenant under Joshua’s leadership. There is a collective aspect of calling all of Israel together, but the call is further individualized to show God’s covenant extended to all ages and resident foreigners. His law was passed from generation to generation, with the younger generation hearing the same message.

The collective can be used as a descriptor for the Christian believers, the worshiping community, gathered together for corporate worship. Everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, is expected to participate. David wrote in Psalm 34:3, “Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.” This verse is an invitation to worship the LORD together. It is void of any

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<sup>79</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “Deuteronomy,” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 2, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 645.



specifics of what that should look like. David’s testimony in Psalm 34 “is personal, though not merely individual; others have known, others are invited to share, this radiant, blessed, and satisfying experience.”<sup>80</sup>

Every generation is responsible for teaching the next generation about God's greatness and His plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. David declared, “One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts” (Ps. 145:4). Pastors and worship leaders should become knowledgeable about each generation represented in their congregations and then help each generation appreciate the other’s life journey that shapes their understanding of who God is biblically and what He has been to them. “Yet though we are not given details [of early Christian worship], we have been given enough glimpses of early worship life to make a number of principles clear. One such principle is that God’s people have always included all ages in their worship.”<sup>81</sup>

In 2 Chronicles 20:13-19, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, gathered all the people together for corporate prayer and fasting to seek God’s guidance against an impending invasion by the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites. “All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD..., Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord” (2 Chron. 20:13, 18). The importance of this passage of Scripture is that it reminds all the people present of God’s omnipotence, apart from anything humans can do when facing what appears to be an unbeatable situation. “The God who had parted the Red Sea had not changed in hundreds

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<sup>80</sup> R. E. O. White, “Psalms,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 379.

<sup>81</sup> Howard Vanderwell, “Biblical Values to Shape the Congregation,” in *The Church of All Ages: Generational Worshiping Together* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 20, Kindle.

of years, and he is still the same today (cf. Isa. 52:10; Zech. 9:9). The assurance of God's presence was more than a theological statement; it was to be a source of strength."<sup>82</sup>

In the following three passages of Scripture, the parents are responsible for training children in the ways of the Lord. In Deuteronomy 11:18-19, the Lord says, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." What happens in the corporate worship setting is an extension of what has already been taught at home about Who God is and what He requires of those who would trust Him and His redemptive process. Asaph writes in Psalms 78:5-6, "He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children." What is missing today in some of our churches is the consistent passing down of God's biblical teachings and His mighty acts in the lives of His people from one generation to the next. Christians must not shy away from declaring the wondrous deeds of the Lord nor keep it to themselves. Solomon writes in Proverbs 22:6, "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."

## **New Testament**

When the teachers of the law (scribes) accused Jesus of driving out demons by being possessed by Beelzebub, he responds to them in a parable about division. "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house

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<sup>82</sup> J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, vol. 9, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 294.

cannot stand” (Mark 3:24-25). This is still true today as many churches must seriously address the issues causing generational rifts, which can be self-destructive.

Jesus understood the importance of relationships and people working through their differences to build healthy relationships. He told his disciples, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Jesus devoted three years of his life to showing them how a person can love people despite their weaknesses and character flaws. Jesus’ ultimate example of love was on full display when he died on Calvary for the sins of humanity. “This is the duty of all Christians to love. If this love were just a feeling, such a command would be impossible to fulfill. But the love Jesus refers to is an act based in a certain state of heart.”<sup>83</sup>

Paul addresses the unity of the body of Christ in Romans 12:4-10, but he also adds that those in Christ must love and honor one another. “The love Paul calls for and sees to be essential if the Christian congregation is to function as one body in Christ has the quality of family love. By that Paul will mean the kind of love which recognizes and can speak about (in the intimacy of the family) weaknesses and failings, but which has a quality of loyalty that outlasts repeated disappointments.”<sup>84</sup>

Paul expounds upon the theme of unity in this passage of Scripture. “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body. . .” (1 Cor. 12:12-13a). The natural tendency is for the individual to want to appease self, but this is counter-productive to Christian unity. Paul goes on to write in verse 21, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’

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<sup>83</sup> Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, vol. 4, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 378.

<sup>84</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary – Volume 38: Romans 9-16*, gen. eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 753.

And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” In other words, no generation can ever say that another generation is not needed. “But often in the church we have a tendency to seek unity in conformity. Rather than encouraging each person’s uniqueness, we often discourage it.”<sup>85</sup>

Unity is only possible when undergirded by love. Paul writes, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Cor. 13:4-5). Conflicts resulting from generational differences can most likely be minimized if people allow love to keep them from exhibiting behavior towards one another that is uncharacteristic of Christlikeness. “What does patient love among believers look like? Such love bears with certain annoyances or inconveniences without complaint. Such love does not lose its temper when provoked. Such love steadily perseveres.”<sup>86</sup>

Unity is sometimes difficult to maintain among the generations when people refuse to accept that shared life experiences shape each generation's worship during a considerable period. Christians are expected to be at peace and in harmony with each other. The example of oneness is found in God, especially in His triune nature. Differences should not be cause for contentious battles within the body of Christ. Paul’s admonishment to the church at Ephesus is very relevant today, especially in an increasingly polarized society. “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one

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<sup>85</sup> Kenneth L. Chafin, *The Communicator’s Commentary*, Vol. 7: *1, 2 Corinthians*. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, gen. ed. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 146.

<sup>86</sup> Grant Osborne, gen. ed. *Life Application Bible Commentary: 1&2 Corinthians* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999), 187.

hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:3-6).

Paul acknowledged Timothy’s “sincere faith” passed down from his grandmother and mother. “I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5). Parents and grandparents have a profound effect on the spiritual growth of their children. When actively involved in godly training, they help children develop their faith in God and Christian values that guide them in every aspect of their lives. “A home, where the father and mother walk in the narrow way, is pretty sure to find their children accompanying them. Not that God’s gifts are hereditary, but example goes a great way, and if the parent, who is the highest on earth to the child, live a Christian life, it is very seldom the child will not follow him.”<sup>87</sup>

#### Theoretical Foundations

Many books, articles, dissertations, and theses on Christian worship, Christian education, and multicultural awareness exist. There are also many books and articles on generations and how these varied groups interact at home, in the workplace, and in religious organizations. Many secular books expound upon each generation's uniqueness and characteristics, which have proven helpful to church leaders because the church is one of the few places where all the generations are present. More research and publications have been on the intergenerational church and intergenerational and multigenerational worship within the last twenty years. “There was a time not long ago when church leaders tried to minister to people as a single mass. No longer. Today’s church leaders understand that ministry must occur among a mosaic of groups

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<sup>87</sup> Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: Second Timothy–Titus, Philemon, vol. 1* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), 10.

and subgroups—most notably generational cohorts.”<sup>88</sup> Because six generations worship together in many churches, information from generational research and studies is valuable for church leaders as they grapple with the challenges of having multiple generations together.

Multigenerational worship is found indirectly in books that advocate for children to be included in corporate worship. One of the earliest books was published in 1981 by David Ng and Virginia Thomas, entitled *Children in the Worshiping Community*.<sup>89</sup> Another early publication in 1985 by D-B Heusser and Phyllis Heusser was *Children as Partners in the Church*. Another precursor to the study of multigenerational worship is intergenerational religious education, which considers age-inclusiveness in curricular development. Two books published in 1977 were George E. Kohler’s *Learning Together: A Guide for Intergenerational Education in the Church* and Marguerite R. Beisserts’ *Intergenerational Manual for Christian Education Shared Approaches*. The researcher will examine additional valuable books discussing the concept of multigenerational worship in the following two sections: cultural study and intergenerational Christian learning.

### **Cultural Study**

Margaret Mead, an anthropologist whose ground-breaking cultural studies of South Pacific Islanders began in 1925 and spanned about 40 years, published her 91-page book, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap*, which examines human culture in terms of past, present, and future activity of a single community. She reveals the complex nature of human civilization and the relationship of persons from different generations living within the same primitive environment and how those relationships evolved or remained the same over

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<sup>88</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, preface to *One Church Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages In Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 9. Kindle.

time. This three-generation model consisted of the grandparent, parent, and child. Mead labels this cultural model as postfigurative (past), cofigurative (present), and prefigurative (future). She writes, “The distinctions I am making among three different kinds of culture—*postfigurative*, in which children learn primarily from their forebears, *cofigurative*, in which both children and adults learn from their peers, and *prefigurative*, in which adults also learn from their children—are a reflection of the period in which we live.”<sup>89</sup> She surmises that if any culture is to survive, its survival depends on three generations living and interacting together. Mead’s research approach is studying the past culture to understand the present culture better and make assumptions about the future culture.

Within Mead’s cultural model, change, or stagnation, most often depends on the dominant generation. In a culture with little outside influence, such as a primitive one, the dominant generation is the elders or postfigurative culture. Conversely, “in a society in which the only model was a cofigurative one, old and young alike would assume that it was ‘natural’ for the behavior of each new generation to differ from that of the preceding generation.”<sup>90</sup> Throughout history, each generation replicated the previous generation to ensure the continuity of the culture. Change is not always easy, and the children are expected to continue to live life as their forebearers. “The child is wholly dependent, and it is on this dependency that the human culture has been built, as generation after generation for hundreds of thousands of years, adults have imposed on children, through their care for them, their vision of what life should be.”<sup>91</sup> Mead does not advocate disregarding life lessons learned from past generations or those tolerated by

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<sup>89</sup> Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 1.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

the present generation. Instead, it suggests that adults leave room for new possibilities from their children to be manifested and discovered.

Learning from the past by examining generational behavior and its cyclical pattern and using the lessons learned as predictors for future generational behavior in American society is what William Strauss and Neil Howe present in their book, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. They write, "We treat generations as *people moving through time*, each group or generation of people possessing a distinctive sense of self."<sup>92</sup> In this groundbreaking book on generational theory, Strauss and Neil explain, in detail, what they describe as four generational types or phases of life—Idealist, Reactive, Civic, and Adaptive. They describe the characteristics and defining social moments of the 18 American generations, from the first Puritans born in 1584 to the first Millennials born in 1982. Every generation cycles, or moves, through each generational type in twenty-two-year increments. They further write, "Examining history by age location, however, we can see how events shape the personalities of different age groups differently according to their phase of life, and how people retain those personality differences as they grow older."<sup>93</sup>

The book highlights generational differences crucial for the growth and development of a healthy society. Some of those differences are good, others negative, and some are harmful and others beneficial. Every generation leaves a legacy or endowment built upon by the next generation. Conflict is inevitable as people move through the various phases of life and adapt to industrial, technological, economic, spiritual, and medical advances in society. "Whatever its

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<sup>92</sup> William Straus and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1991), 32.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.



type, a generation works to achieve endowments with an intensity that varies over its lifecycle.”<sup>94</sup>

### **Intergenerational Christian Learning and Formation**

James W. White addresses isolationism in religious education in a time of age segregation in his book, *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory, and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community*. He writes, “The question to ask is, ‘Who or what will deliver us from this bond of isolation?’ The answer proposed in this book is the church/synagogue. The faith community, which is intergenerational in its life, will promote lifestyle growth in individuals which affirms human connectedness.”<sup>95</sup> White does not take credit for beginning the discussion of the generations interacting together in the faith community, which he affirms was already occurring; however, the term “Intergenerational Religious Education (IGRE)” was not well-known. He notes that thousands of church activities and programs can be classified as IGRE, but they can be categorized into six basic models of IGRE. The two models specific to the researcher’s thesis project are the *Worship Service* and the *Worship-Education Program* models.

White defines IGRE as “two or more different age groups of people in a religious community together learning/growing/living in faith through common-experiences, parallel-learning, contributive-occasions, and interactive-sharing.”<sup>96</sup> He also presents a theoretical construct for IGRE based on biblical, historical, and theological information that he uses to

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<sup>94</sup> Straus and Howe, *Generations*, 370.

<sup>95</sup> James W. White, *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory, and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988), 11.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

support his theory that intergeneration has been part of the religious community for centuries. For example, in Psalm 145, verse 4, White states, “The verse contains the important biblical idea that the generations are related to each other and need each other for life together in God.”<sup>97</sup> Throughout his book, he presents the idea of relationship-building across all ages, just as the common thread throughout Scripture is God establishing a restored relationship with humanity. “By being together and worshipping together, people learn together. The learning helps young and old focus on ‘right relationship’ with God and with one another.”<sup>98</sup> In addition to the biblical, historical, and theological findings, White also considers religious educationalists and social scientists' writings in developing what he calls the “Total Parish Paradigm.”

“The Total Parish Paradigm is a holistic integration of the six basic models of IGRE presented in the first section of [his] book, enriching these known practices with the theoretical insights presented in the middle section of this volume.”<sup>99</sup> White is most familiar with the worship-education model. “For many churches and synagogues, age-inclusive worship is an ongoing, unself-conscious practice. These faith communities have never considered doing anything else. For them, worship life is *the* educational structure of the congregation, as there may be no formal educational program per se.”<sup>100</sup> A worship-education model is a three-phase approach that consists of first an established time for all ages to be present during the worship service. This phase may be modified as necessary where age-appropriateness is needed. Secondly, the worship service is followed by an established education time, including some age-

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<sup>97</sup> White, *Intergenerational Religious Education.*, 70.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

appropriate learning elements. Thirdly, everyone is brought back together for a final set time of celebration. White's reasoning for stressing intergenerational is that "for most of the centuries that Christian people have assembled, they have done so intergenerationally and in a ritual life which evolved to involve everyone present."<sup>101</sup>

James White influenced Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross' intergenerational research. Their book, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*, is an essential resource in addressing age segregation in the church. "House churches of the first century were places in which all generations were present . . . The generations remained integrated throughout much of Christian history until fairly recently."<sup>102</sup> They acknowledge that the church followed societal norms that shifted towards age segregation over the past century. Many American churches moved away from centuries-old practices of all generations being together in worship and spiritual learning. They propose that the church should *reverse* course and return to the generations being together again. Allen and Ross write, "Intergenerationality enables the whole church to benefit from each individual's God-given gifts and enables believers to fully live out being the body of Christ and the family of faith."<sup>103</sup> They are not advocating for all ages to be together at all times. However, they propose "that frequent and regular cross-generational opportunities for worship, learning, outreach, service, and fellowship offer distinctive spiritual benefits and blessings."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> White, *Intergenerational Religious Education*, 78.

<sup>102</sup> Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 35.

<sup>103</sup> Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 47-48.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

Allen and Ross provide extensive support for their research on intergenerational Christian formation. The structure of their book is purposeful in its construct. It is divided into four parts. In each of the four sections of their book, Allen and Ross are deliberate and strategic in citing prominent authors' and experts' works in their respective fields of study. In part one, Allen and Ross explore the trends that caused age segregation and offer a compelling argument for intergenerational Christian formation. "The excessive individualism of secular Western culture is fundamentally incompatible with the life of community as depicted in Scripture."<sup>105</sup> In part two, Allen and Ross provide biblical, theological, and theoretical support for bringing the generations back together. "Scripture presumes that faith formation occurs within intergenerational, familial and community settings."<sup>106</sup> In part three, Allen and Ross examine social scientists' research covering religious socialization, generational theory, and gerontology, discussing the importance of adults' and children's shared spiritual growth and development. Finally, Allen and Ross present practical intergenerational Christian formation applications in selected church ministry settings in part four. They address barriers to successful implementation and offer suggestions for overcoming those barriers.

*Intergenerational Christian Formation* is a comprehensive guidebook for church leaders desiring to cultivate an interactive environment between the various generations, moving them from age segregation to intergenerational. "But for intergenerational Christian formation to happen, the generations must *be* together; they must *know each other*; and they must experience life in the body of Christ *together*."<sup>107</sup> Dedicated church leaders must implement models based

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<sup>105</sup> Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 43.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 270-271.

on a local church's needs. Members must be willing to participate in activities and ministries that involve all generations together. "Creating an entire culture or ethos of intergenerationality. They will require wise leaders who will remind the faith community often of the strengths, benefits and joys of intergenerational experiences."<sup>108</sup> Allen and Ross are transparent about the challenges but are confident that returning to the model of generations together as found in Scripture is what God desires for the church.

### **Congregational Dissonance and Harmony**

In their book *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations*, Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof examine generational and congregational differences contributing to local church conflict. They reveal points of commonality that aid in bridging gaps between the generations. The book is a collaborative effort between Carroll and Roof that documents the findings of their two-year study of twenty congregations and two campus ministries in North Carolina and Southern California. The study includes personal observations of various congregations, interviews, and surveys. "This book explores how one generation differs from another both within contemporary society and within a religious congregation."<sup>109</sup> These differences can be traced to historical events such as World War II, major cultural shifts caused by the introduction of television, or disruption in family life caused by a high divorce rate, all of which help shape each generation's identity. Carroll and Roof study three generations: pre-boomers (the GI and silent generations), boomers, and generational Xers (gen Xers). They write, "In this volume, we concern ourselves with generations not just because they have been

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<sup>108</sup> Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 271.

<sup>109</sup> Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof, introduction to *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures In Congregations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 2.

overlooked but because we believe they are of far greater significance in understanding the dynamics of congregational change than is generally recognized by sociologists and other religious commentators.”<sup>110</sup>

*Bridging Divided Worlds* is comprised of two parts. Carroll and Roof provide an in-depth review of the societal, familial, and congregational changes since the mid-twentieth century in chapters one through four in the book's first half. “Major events in society during an individual’s adolescent and early adult years shape his or her outlook, in subtle and enduring ways. More than just a definition of social reality, a person’s values, sensitives, and emotions are fundamentally affected by such experiences.”<sup>111</sup> These events created *generational consciousness*, influencing how persons of a particular generation may react to the same phenomena with opposing outcomes. No two generations are alike, each having its peculiarity. Just as generations have distinctive characteristics, Carroll and Roof describe congregational characteristics. They provided historical context for the American congregation’s development from the early colonial days. They note “that congregational leaders and their members must constantly adapt to challenge as populations and social settings change.”<sup>112</sup> They group current congregations into three types: *inherited model* (traditional), *blended or mixed model*, and *generation-specific*.

In the book's second half, chapters five through seven, Carroll and Roof thoroughly explore the three congregational models. After briefly explaining the models, they also offer study results of three churches for each congregational model, comparing and contrasting each church. These churches represent various denominations, cultures, and membership sizes, from

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<sup>110</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 4.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

small to large churches. They conclude that “the challenge for any congregation—whether inherited, blended, or generation-specific—is to cultivate awareness of its mission and how it came to exist in the institutional form that it does, and consciously to try to model the social ideals and teachings for which it stands.”<sup>113</sup> They comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each congregational model. However, ultimately, the individual’s decision to join a particular religious institution will depend on how connected the individual feels to that institution. Their interaction with other congregants will be the determining factor in staying because of a positive interaction or leaving because of a negative interaction. “Division between generations poses an opportunity for recasting faith and practice in ways that may be newly meaningful across generations.”<sup>114</sup>

Bob Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter advocate the tri-generational church (Tri-Gen Church), as explained in their book, *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps In Your Church*. The American church is graying, and many churches will not survive if they do not include at least two additional generations. When this book was published in 2000, the predominant generations were the “Builder Generation” (persons born before 1946), the “Boomer Generation” (persons born between 1946 and 1964), and “Generation X” (persons born between 1965 and 1983). However, this is no guarantee that a church will survive as a Tri-Gen church if generational differences impede a cohesive existence as one church family. Whitesel and Hunter write, “As a result of the generation gaps many aging congregations watch their youthful members go elsewhere. Unchurched young people the church so desperately seeks to reach with

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<sup>113</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 206.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

the love and solace of Christ are viewing our churches as irrelevant and inflexible.”<sup>115</sup> The keepers of tradition, the older generation, must be willing to listen to the younger generations and share leadership responsibilities. The younger generations must be willing to listen to the older generation without demanding to abandon their traditions and be patient with them when using new technology. “To successfully bridge the generation gaps, a congregation (tertiary group) must possess healthy, sympathetic, and supportive generational sub-congregations (i.e., Generation X, Boomer, and Builder secondary groups).”<sup>116</sup>

Whitesel and Hunter compare and contrast generational characteristics of the Builders, Boomers, and Gen X cohorts, describing the type of church each group generally looks for when searching for a church home. They support the idea of “Oneness” while not diminishing the reality of fundamental differences among each cohort. The challenge for church leadership is finding commonality without allowing differences to create rifts and tensions in the congregation that could potentially cause irreparable harm to the fellowship. Whitesel and Hunter strongly believe the Tri-generational Church is the best model for churches. They write, “The Tri-generational Church is a holistic congregation with three distinct generational sub-congregations peacefully co-existing under one roof, one name, and one leadership core.”<sup>117</sup> They devote an entire chapter to explaining this definition, espousing that a church’s strength is bound by its membership as one body. “If congregations are founded upon genuine respect and tolerance for

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<sup>115</sup> Bob Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter, preface to *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 7), 2000.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.



the ideals and aspirations of each generation, they will be steadily resistant to generational strife and friction.”<sup>118</sup>

If a church congregation strives to be healthy and growing, Whitesel and Hunter offer seven steps for implementing a Tri-generational Church model. Church leadership must have intentionality in planning and strategizing within each stage. “However, keep in mind that all steps must be fully investigated and understood before any individual step is undertaken.”<sup>119</sup>

Although Whitesel and Hunter present their seven steps, they realize it is only a starting place for congregations to build upon their unique culture. They write, “Do not think of them as ends in themselves, but as idea generators and abstractions that can guide your congregation into its own distinct tri-generational personality.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided*, 98.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to understand why there is a division among the different generations worshipping together during Sunday morning worship service and to determine what can be done to bridge the generational gap. It aims to examine the worship styles of six of the current seven generations. Each generation has its own life experiences that influence its worship style preferences. As Gary McIntosh writes, the goal of examining their generational differences and worship styles is to “gain a better understanding of the issues involved in ministering to multiple generational groups in”<sup>121</sup> the researcher’s church. Jackson Carroll and Wade Roof note, “Many cultural and religious changes in American life are bound up with how the generations relate to a congregation. Each generation bears the distinct imprint of a huge set of influences shaping its outlook, sensitivity, and institutional style.”<sup>122</sup> Some differences impede mutual appreciation for each group, and this study will assist in discovering common values conducive to a positive worship experience.

A significant part of the worship experience includes music. In some churches, music begins the worship service and ends the service, with music interspersed throughout the service. In this researcher’s place of context, there are usually about four to five songs sung by the choir and congregation, three sung by the choir, and one instrumental song during a typical Sunday morning worship service for a total of seven to eight songs. “It is almost impossible to imagine worship without music, which has enriched the experience of Christian public prayer through centuries. In many ways, the history of Christian worship directly parallels the history of the

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<sup>121</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages In Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 14, Kindle.

<sup>122</sup> Carrol and Roof. *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 36.

music written to be performed in church.”<sup>123</sup> Music is included in worship. “Even from Old Testament times, the people of God have given music a major role in worship. In the primitive Song of Moses (Exod. 15) as well as in the relatively sophisticated music of the temple, music was sung and frequently accompanied by musical instruments.”<sup>124</sup> Worship is God-centered, and all the elements of worship—prayer, Scripture, proclamation, offering, music, and the ordinances—should help the worshiper focus on God to glorify Him. “Music, therefore, is placed in service to worship, not the other way around; worship doesn’t exist as a platform for musical engagement but to facilitate worship in fulfilling its God-given purpose: proclaiming and celebrating God’s eternal narrative.”<sup>125</sup> Worship can take place without music. It can be omitted when praying, reading the Scripture, during the proclamation, offering, or even ordinances. Many of these involve speech or moments of silence. “The main point is this: pastoral musicians understand that worship is the primary event and that music helps to enable it to be the glorious occasion that it is.”<sup>126</sup>

This researcher used qualitative research for this thesis project because, as John and J. David Creswell write, it is “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data

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<sup>123</sup> Susan J. White, *Foundations of Christian Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 41-42.

<sup>124</sup> Segler and Bradley, *Christian Worship*, 105, Kindle.

<sup>125</sup> Cherry, *The Music Architect*, 39, Kindle.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.”<sup>127</sup> This research is needed because the number of people in their 80s and 90s is increasing, so some congregations may have seven generations worshipping together. This thesis project does not include information on Generation Alpha (Gen Alpha), born in 2013 and up to the present. The oldest Gen Alphas turned eight years old during the time of the research for this thesis project. Tim Sensing explains, “Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience.”<sup>128</sup> Worship planners need to clearly understand each generation to plan worship services that are biblically and theologically grounded and engage the whole congregation. This section will include the participants, study design, and data collection tools.

#### Intervention Design

The researcher used *purposive samples* to determine the participants for this thesis project at his place of ministry. Sensing writes that this type of sampling is used “to select people who are aware of the situation and meet the criteria and attributes essential to your research.”<sup>129</sup> Study participants consisted of members of New Calvary Baptist Church, where the researcher serves as Minister of Music, The Gospel Music Workshop of America, Inc., Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, the Hampton University Ministers’ Conference/Choir Directors’ & Organists’ Guild Workshop, and worship ministry peers. The study focused on adult African American male and female participants aged 18-65 and senior participants aged 65 and older.

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<sup>127</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2020), 23, Kindle.

<sup>128</sup> Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 57, Kindle.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

These groups will enable the researcher to answer the research question because they comprise the church's demographics, where he serves, his affiliated organizations, and worship ministry peers. Including these groups is necessary because they represent the six generations that this thesis project is about and can provide insight into generational differences and similarities.

The researcher created a survey (Appendix A) consisting of 22 questions requesting demographic information, questions about the participants' worship style preferences, and general questions about their churches' worship services. The survey was created online and password-protected using the Form Application in Microsoft 365. It is a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Questions one through four were about demographics.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What generation were you born in?
4. Please specify your ethnicity.

Questions five through nine were about denomination affiliation, length of membership, and worship service times.

5. What denomination is your church?
6. How long have you been a member?
7. What are the service times for your church?
8. What service do you attend?
9. What service do you prefer to attend and why?

Questions 10 through 11 were about church attendance and worship style preferences.

10. How often do you attend Sunday worship service?
11. What is your preferred worship service style?

Questions 12 through 13 were about music preferences.

12. Which style of music do you prefer most?

13. Which style of music do you prefer least?

Questions 14 through 16 were about the order of service.

14. Describe what you like best about the flow of the order of service.

15. Describe what you like least about the flow of the order of service.

16. What recommendation would you make to change the worship service or the order of service?

Question 17 was about youth participation in the worship service.

17. Should youth be used during the worship service to welcome guests, provide offertory prayer, give the altar prayer, serve as ushers, etc., and why?

Question 18 was about visual and fine arts during the worship service.

18. If visual and fine arts are incorporated into the worship service, what value do they add (i.e., mime, liturgical dance, poetry, video)?

Questions 19 through 22 were general questions about the worship service.

19. What do you consider an appropriate length for the worship service?

20. Select the response that best describes your thoughts about the length of the worship service at your church.

21. What is your preference for attire for Sunday morning worship?

22. Provide a brief description of your overall view about worship at your church.

The survey was used for participants to complete online or in paper form within 15 minutes. The same questions were going to be used during 30-minute in-person interviews. The researcher would also participate in the study as a participant-observer during worship services at

his place of ministry, noting all aspects of the service, from the “Call to Worship” to the “Benediction.” This researcher was initially given written approval (Appendix B) by the senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Wm. Marcus Small, on December 6, 2020, to conduct onsite interviews at New Calvary Baptist Church. The researcher was also granted permission (Appendix C) by the Executive Pastor, Rev. Byron Harris, on December 8, 2020, to access New Calvary’s membership and faculty/staff list to invite them to participate in this study.

Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix D) approved the researcher to research on January 25, 2021. Additional supporting documents were approved by IRB, including recruitment templates, phone and text scripts, and a consent form (Appendixes F-J). The researcher’s longitudinal study was conducted from February 22, 2021, to March 12, 2021, using online and hardcopy surveys. The maximum number of participants approved for this study was 60. To increase the possibility of the survey being completed by an acceptable amount of study participants, the researcher chose to recruit 61 members from New Calvary and 60 non-members: 10 each from Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Norfolk, First Baptist Church of Lambert’s Point, Norfolk, Hampton University Ministers’ Conference/Choir Directors’ and Organists’ Guild Workshop, the Gospel Music Workshop of America, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, and other worship ministry peers. The researcher formerly served as Minister of Music at Mount Pleasant (nine years) and First Baptist Church of Lambert’s Point (10 ½ years). The researcher also participated in the study as a participant-observer during worship services at his place of ministry, noting all aspects of the service, from the “Call to Worship” to the “Benediction.” The researcher used documentary analysis to identify themes, slippage, and silences in the research data using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to facilitate coding and identifying patterns and themes.

Because of the rise of the COVID-19 Delta variant in the local area, in-person worship services at New Calvary were suspended after December 20, 2020, and resumed on May 30, 2021. This caused limitations in the researcher's methodology. Worship services were pre-recorded at the church on Thursday evenings with only the pastor, associate ministers, Praise Team, musicians, and media ministry personnel in attendance, with no more than ten persons initially allowed in the church. There was no opportunity for the researcher to observe the congregation (approximately 250-300 people in attendance pre-pandemic) since only a few people were present for pre-taping worship services. The worship services were shortened from one hour and 45 minutes to one hour. The pre-recorded services were then uploaded to Facebook and YouTube for streaming on Sunday mornings by the multimedia personnel. There were no other activities held in the church. The researcher submitted a research modification request to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board to exclude interviewing participants and received IRB approval (Appendix E) on February 19, 2021, since the church was closed to all activities except rehearsal of the Praise Team before the pre-recording of the Sunday worship services.

#### Implementation of the Intervention Design

After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher contacted each prospective research participant by mail (Appendix F), e-mail (Appendix G), phone (Appendix H), or text/Facebook Messenger (Appendix I), explaining the research study and providing them with a "Consent Form" (Appendix J) that includes background information, the procedure, risks, benefits, compensation, and confidentiality. The researcher was permitted access to New Calvary's membership list to invite participants to the study. All personal identifying information was stripped from the document before being provided. The initially selected study participant total



was 121. While contacting individuals, the researcher made adjustments, as indicated in Figure

1.

Organization	Initial Selected Study Participants	Added Study Participants	Total Study Participants	Excluded Participants	Final Total Study Participants
NCBC	61	0	61	0	61
MPBC	10	1	11	2	9
FBLP	10	0	10	4	6
GMWA	10	0	10	0	10
FGBCFI	10	0	10	0	10
HUMC/CDOGW	10	0	10	1	9
Others	10	0	10	1	9
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>114</b>
MPBC	Excluded 2 non-leaders or non-music ministry				
FBLP	Excluded 3 non-leaders or non music ministry; 1 no contact info				
HUMC/CDOGW	No return call				
Others	No return call				

Figure 1. Research Study Participants

Figure 2 shows the number of paper surveys mailed, the number of survey links emailed or texted to individuals, and the number of completed surveys.

Survey Instrument	Total Mailed / Emailed	Surveys Completed	Surveys Not Completed	% Completed
Paper Survey Mailed	46	8	38	17%
Survey Link Emailed	68	29	39	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>32%</b>

Figure 2. Completed Surveys

Persons receiving a mailed survey were also provided a self-addressed envelope (with a postage stamp) to place the completed documents for return to the researcher. Persons receiving the survey link via text or email could securely access and complete the survey anonymously on the Microsoft 365 platform after clicking on the link. Respondents were automatically assigned an ID number from 1 to 37 as the surveys were completed. The researcher entered the results of the

eight surveys received via mail into the online survey. Since the approved number of study participants is 60, 37 completed surveys represent 62% of the goal met.

Figure 3 shows the demographics of the study participants contacted via email or text. The largest group consisted of males (55%) because most ministers of music, directors of worship and arts, and clergy were men.

Organization	Males	Females	Total
NCBC	7	8	15
MPBC	5	6	11
FBLP	4	6	10
GMWA	7	3	10
FGBCFI	5	5	10
HUMC/CDOGW	9	1	10
Others	5	5	10
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>76</b>

Figure 3. Demographics of Study Participants Emailed or Texted

After all of the mailed surveys were entered into the online survey, the surveys were stored in a locked safe in the researcher's office at New Calvary. The researcher accessed the survey data on Microsoft 365 to access all of the responses and then exported the data into an Excel spreadsheet, saving the file on his computer. The application auto-generated charts and graphs for answers to closed-ended questions. All data for responses to open-ended questions were automatically placed in a table. The researcher accessed NVivo and accessed the Survey Import Wizard to upload the Excel file into NVivo. It is one of several qualitative computer data analysis programs. John Creswell and J. David Creswell explain, "Qualitative programs have become quite popular, and they help researchers organize, sort, and search for information in text or image databases."<sup>130</sup> NVivo streamlines the hand coding process, allowing autocoding for

<sup>130</sup> Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 216, Kindle.

opened-ended questions. Researchers have the option of adding or deleting codes. They may also change code names. Creswell and Creswell also write, “The basic idea behind these programs is that using the computer is an efficient means for storing and locating qualitative data. Although the researcher still needs to go through each line of text (as in hand coding by going through transcription) and assign codes, this process may be faster and more efficient than hand coding.”<sup>131</sup> The researcher will provide an analysis of the survey in chapter four.

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<sup>131</sup> Creswell and Creswell, 216, Kindle.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

Senior Pastors, Pastors of Worship, Ministers of Music, Directors of Worship and Arts, or Worship Leaders are responsible for bridging the congregation's understanding of worship to the true meaning of worship. They should have a solid biblical and historical understanding of worship to communicate this to the congregation effectively. Worship is about God's story and relationship with His humanity from creation to eternity. "True worship embraces love for the people of God—demonstrated through service."<sup>132</sup> Worship is more than a style, but many churches are identified as traditional, contemporary, or blended because of human preference. "Worship is NOT the music, the methods, or the messenger. Worship is our expression of love to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, lived out in our daily lives."<sup>133</sup> Christians must consistently read the Bible because God reveals Himself in it. "Simply put, worship is our response to the presence of God made possible by Jesus. However, it is not some general notion of God that captivates us, but most often a specific quality, or attribute."<sup>134</sup>

The worship service survey was given to a diverse group of persons representing six generations from several different denominations to determine their view of worship in their respective churches and generational differences and similarities. The total number of participants was 37. The researcher anticipated that the largest group of participants in the study by gender would be women, based on the Pew Research Center's "Religious Landscape Study of

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<sup>132</sup> Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 335, Kindle.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>134</sup> Noland, *Worship On Earth As It Is In Heaven*, 39, Kindle.

2014.” Compared to men, their weekly attendance at religious services is 58% to 42%.<sup>135</sup> The largest age group expected to be represented included those 65 and older. Their weekly attendance at religious services is 48% compared to the smallest age group, 18-29, at 27%.<sup>136</sup> The largest generation expected to participate in the survey is the Baby Boomers, whose weekly attendance at religious services is 34%.<sup>137</sup> The smallest generations expected to participate are the Silent and GI generations, at 17% and 2%, respectively.<sup>138</sup> Since these persons are 75 and over, their low percentages are likely due to their smaller generational sizes and possibly health issues that may prevent them from attending weekly religious services.

## Analysis Review

### Demographic Information

Questions one through four pertain to demographic information for the study participants.

#### Question 1: What is your age?

Only 36 of the 37 study participants responded to this question (see Figure 4). The most prominent representative group was aged 65-74 at 30%, with 11 persons. The second-largest group was between the ages of 55-64 at 27% with ten persons. The smallest group was 75 years or older at 5% with only two persons.

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<sup>135</sup> Pew Research Center, "Attendance at Religious Services" *Religious Landscape Study (2014)*, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/>.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

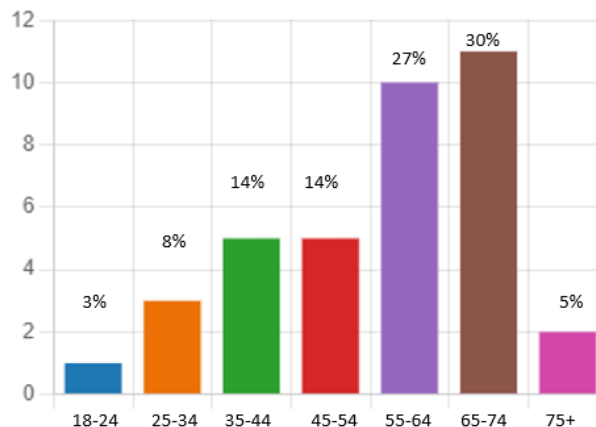


Figure 4. Age Group

### Question 2: What is your gender?

As anticipated, females participated in the study overwhelmingly, representing 67% of the participants (see Figure 5).

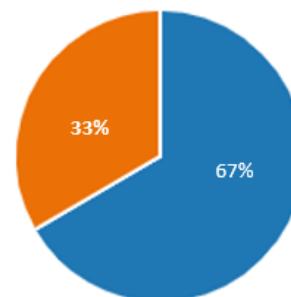


Figure 5. Gender

### Question 3: What generation were you born in?

In Figure 6, the largest generational cohort was the Baby Boomers at 51%, with 19 participants. The second-largest generational cohort was Generation X at 24%, with nine participants. The smallest generation represented was Generation Z at 3%, with one participant. This cohort and the Traditional (2 respondents at 5%) were underrepresented in this research project.

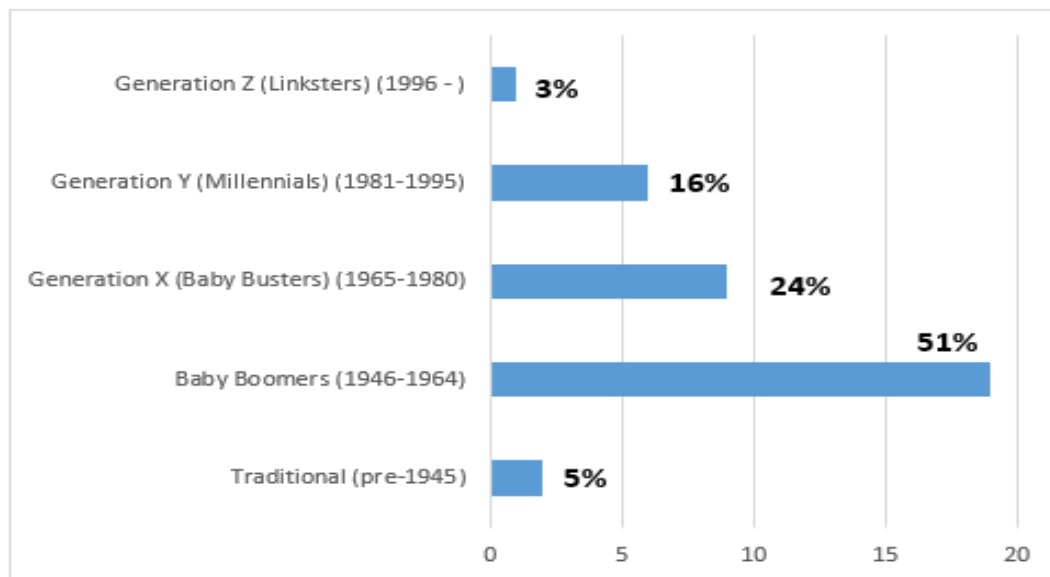


Figure 6. Generational Classification

**Question 4: Please specify your ethnicity.**

One hundred percent of the study participants were African American (see Figure 7).

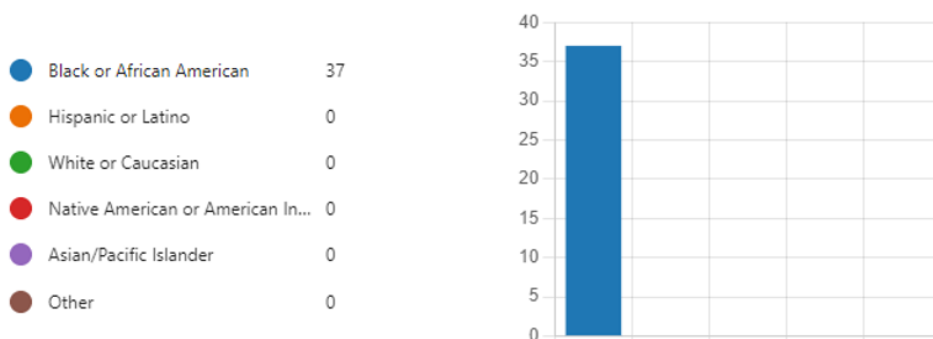


Figure 7. Ethnicity

**Church Affiliation**

Questions five through nine pertain to the study participants' church affiliation and membership.

**Question 5: What denomination is your church?**

The majority of the participants (32) were Baptist (86%) (see Figure 8). One Apostolic participant and four belonged to "Other" denominations.

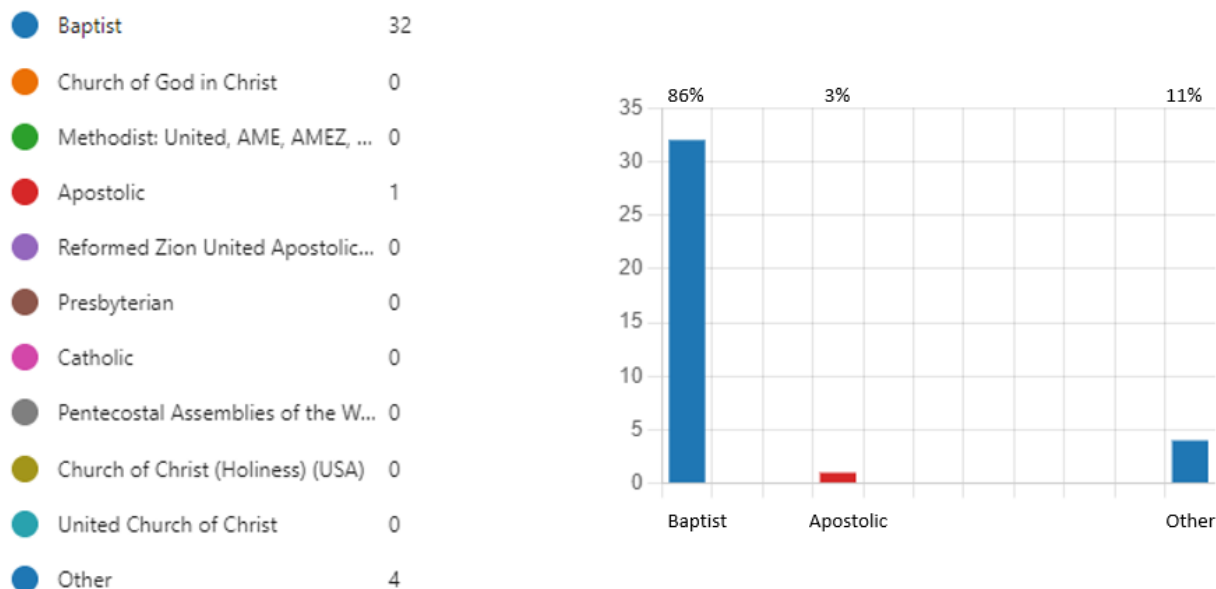


Figure 8. Church Affiliation and Membership

### Question 6: How long have you been a member?

Only 36 of the 37 study participants responded to this question (see Figure 9). Most participants (11) were members of their respective churches for 1-10 years (31%). Seven persons (19%) were members of their churches for 11-20 years. Five persons (14%) were members of their churches for 11-20 years. Five persons (14%) were members of their respective churches for 51-60 years.

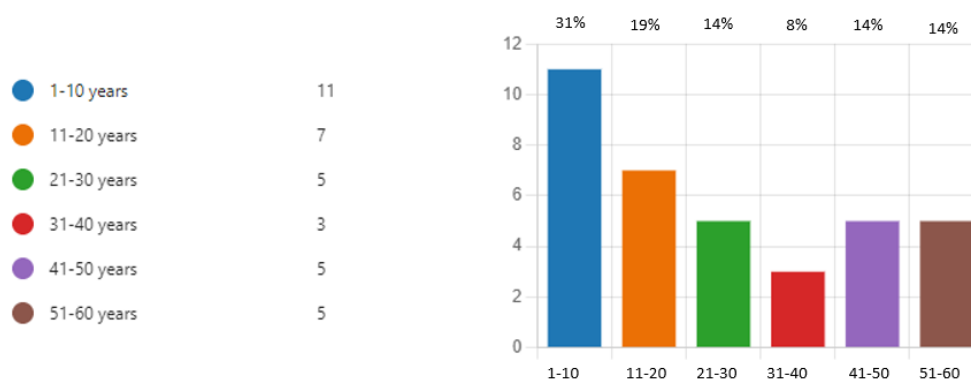


Figure 9. Years of Membership



**Question 7: What are the service times for your church? (Pick all that apply)**

Twenty-four participants attended churches with multiple worship services (64%) (see Figure 10). Fifteen attended churches with worship services starting at 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. (41%). One participant listed the church service times as 10:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. No additional information was provided on the apparent overlap of the two worship services. The same appears to apply to the one participant who listed the church service times as 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

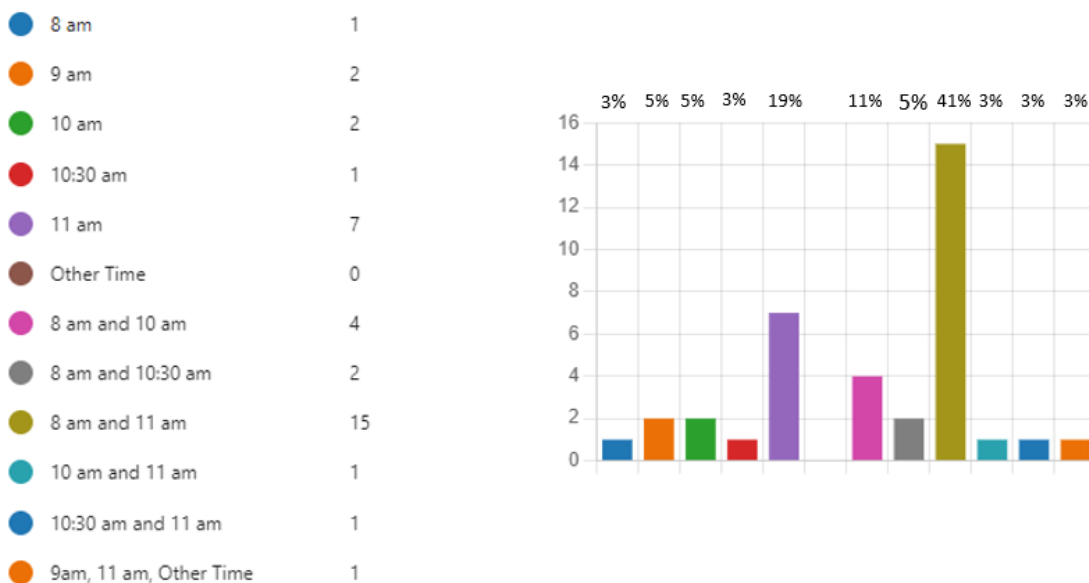


Figure 10. Worship Service Times

The exact service times are listed by generation in Figure 11. Forty-two percent of the Baby Boomers and 33% of Gen Xers and Millennials attend churches with 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 worship services.

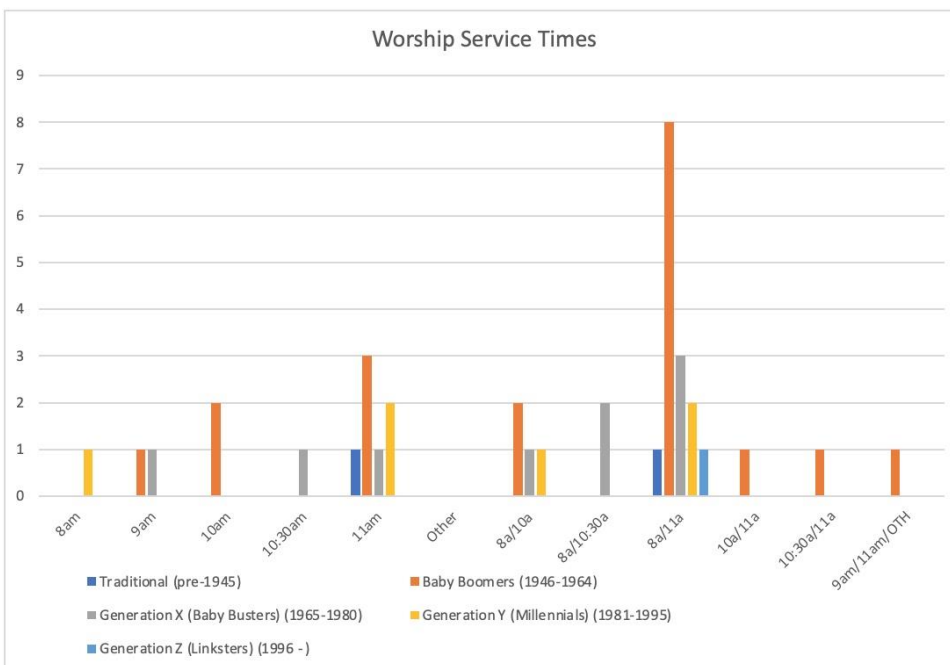


Figure 11. Worship Service Times by Generation

**Question 8: Which services do you attend? (Pick all that apply)**

Two of the most attended worship services by the participants were 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. (see Figure 12). Seven persons (19%) attend only the 8:00 a.m. service, and another seven attend the 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Because this was a closed-ended question, the participants could not provide information regarding whether they attended both services on the same Sunday or if they occasionally attended services at different times on another Sunday. Ten persons (27%) attended only the 11:00 a.m. service.

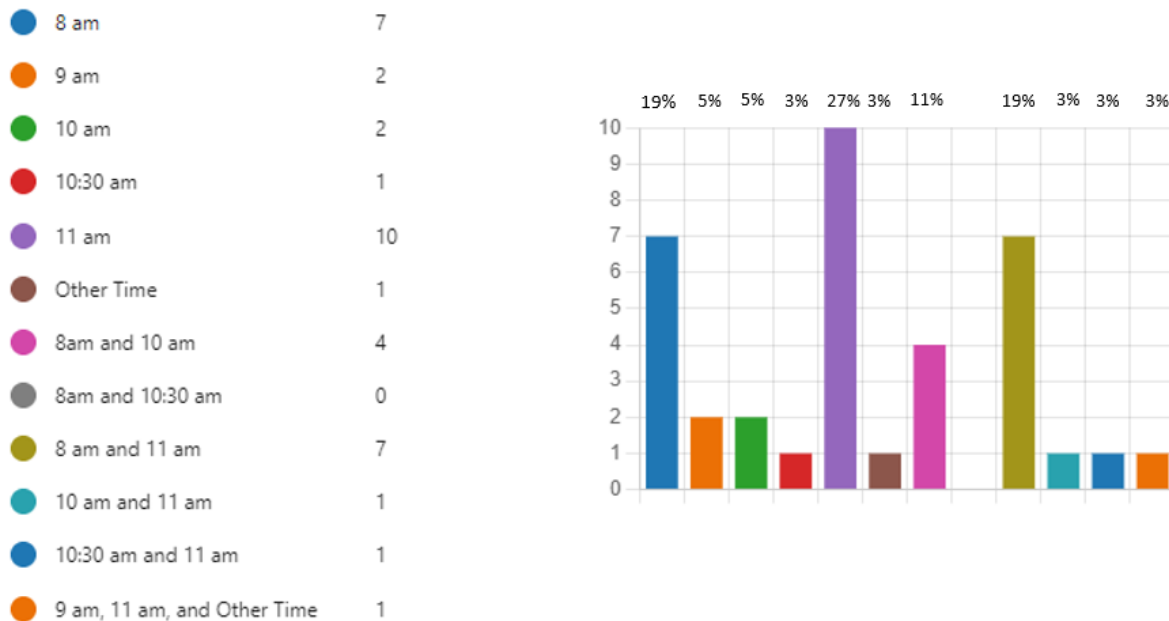


Figure 12. Worship Service Attendance Times

The exact service times are listed by generation in Figure 13. The Baby Boomers are the most prominent representative group in this study, as shown in question one, and participants in this group attend 10 of the 12 worship service times listed.

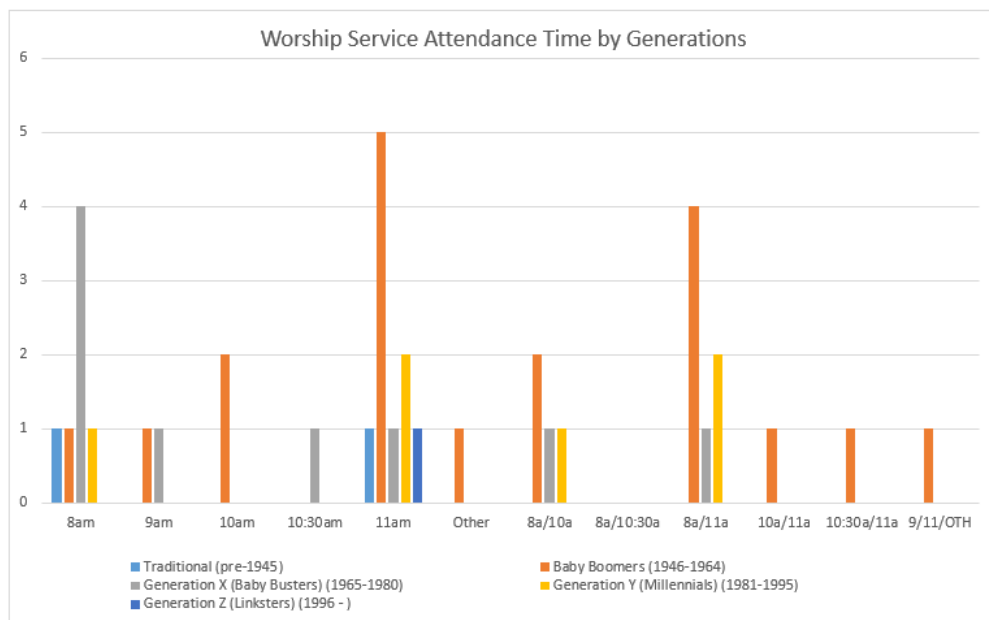


Figure 13. Worship Service Attendance Times by Generation

### Question 9 – Which service do you prefer to attend and why?

Only 35 of 37 study participants responded to this open-ended question. The most preferred worship times were 8:00 a.m. (12 respondents) and 11:00 a.m. (9 respondents). The 8:00 a.m. service was mostly preferred because the respondents were either “early risers” or liked finishing worshipping early so they could have the rest of Sunday to do other activities. Surprisingly, only two respondents expressed their style of worship or musical preference. Below are a few responses.

*Respondent 6 (Gen Xer):* “The 8 am service because the music is familiar to my spiritual formation as a child.”

*Respondent 8 (Baby Boomer):* “8 am - the service is more traditional, and I like the older hymns.”

*Respondent 16 (Gen Xer):* “So I can worship with the assembly and have the rest of my day to do what is needed.”

*Respondent 26 (Baby Boomer):* “8:00 service because I get back home early.”

*Respondent 30 (Millennial):* “8 am - The service is shorter. I get in and get out.”

The 11:00 a.m. service was the second most preferred time (9 respondents). There were varying reasons listed including “Only one service offered,” “More time to get ready,” and “It’s not too early.” Another surprise was that only one respondent addressed the worship style. This researcher was anticipating more responses to address this. A Gen Xer responded, “I prefer the 11 am service. I’m not a stranger to traditional music and preaching. However, I can relate more to the 11 am service; the music contemporary (slightly radical) service speaks about topics that I endure in my everyday life.”

## Church Attendance/Worship Style and Music Preferences

Questions 10 through 13 pertain to participants' church attendance, worship style, and music preferences.

### Question 10 – How often do you attend Sunday worship service?

Most respondents (81%) attend Sunday worship service every Sunday, as shown in Figure 14. Baby Boomers account for 49% of participants who attend Sunday worship service every Sunday, followed by Gen Xers at 16% and Millennials at 14%, as seen in Figure 14.

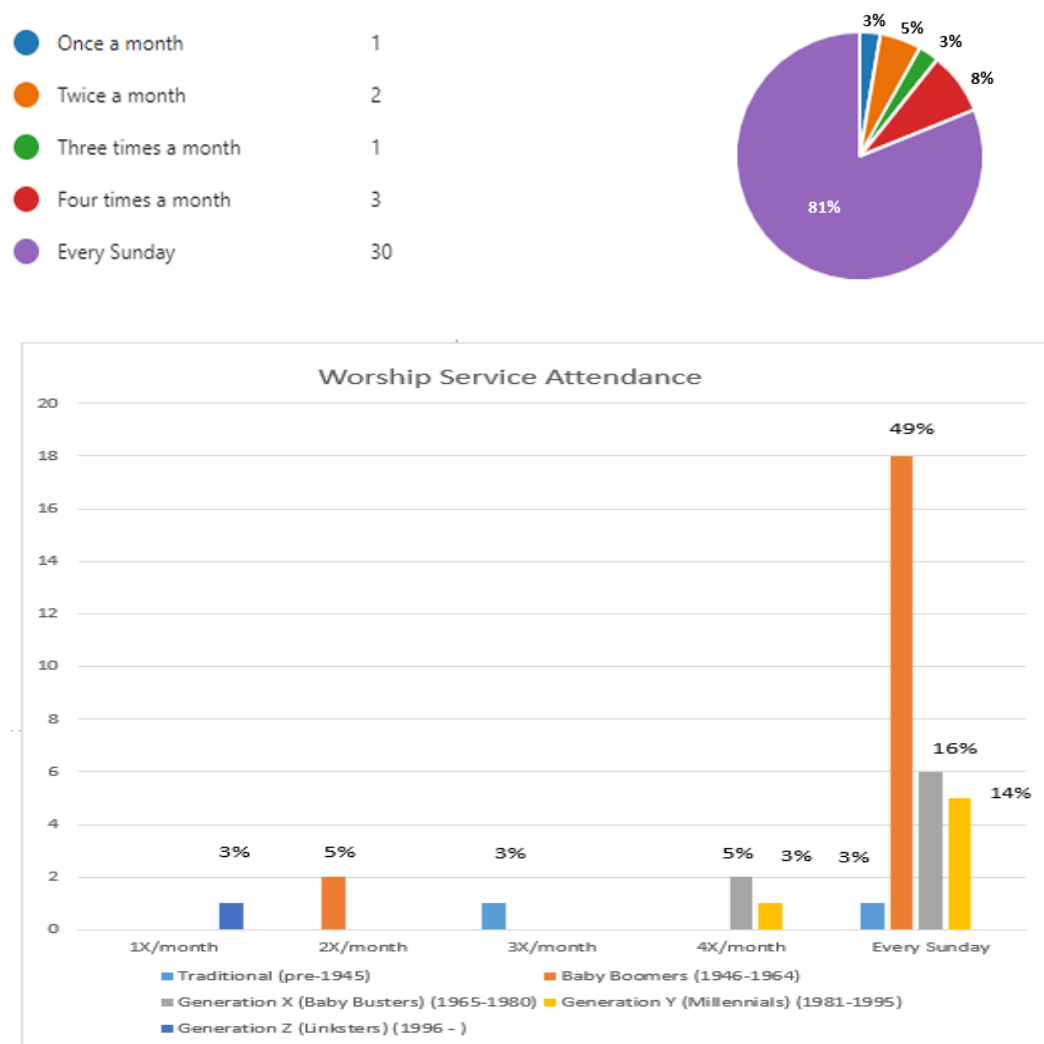


Figure 14. Worship Service Attendance

### Question 11 – What is your preferred worship service style?

Sixty-two percent preferred a blended worship service style (Figure 15). Of those, 30% are Baby Boomers, and 16% are Gen Xers and Millennials.

● Traditional	5
● Contemporary with Praise and ...	5
● Blended	23
● No particular preference	4

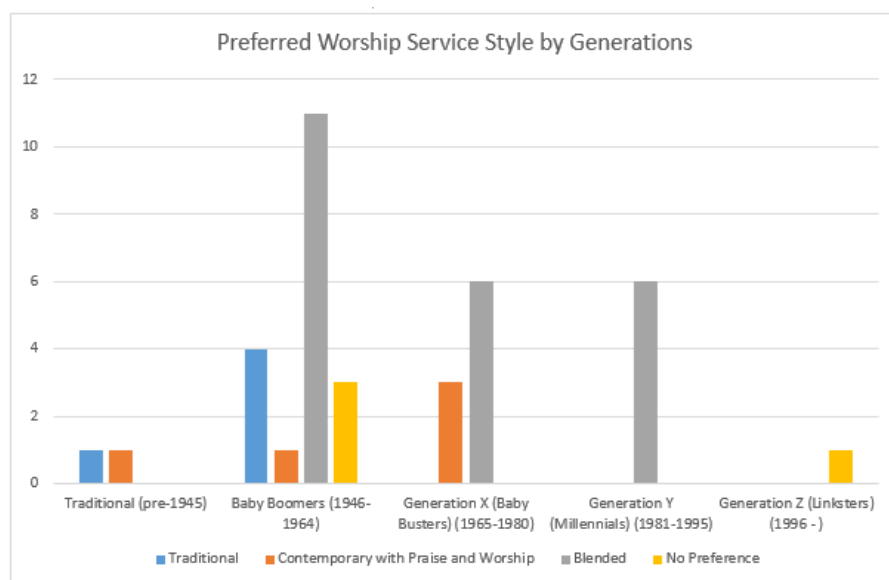
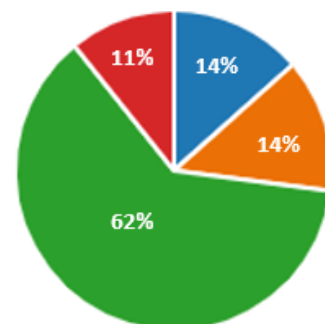


Figure 15. Preferred Worship Style

### Question 12 – What style of music do you prefer? (Select all that apply)

The three most preferred music styles were hymns (32), traditional gospel music (32), and praise and worship music (29) (see Figure 16). Baby Boomer, Gen Xer, and Millennial respondents selected all music styles listed in the survey. Baby Boomers, the largest generation represented in the research project, were twice as likely to prefer all music styles than the

second-largest generation, Gen Xers (see Figure 17.). The Generation Z respondent only preferred praise and worship music.

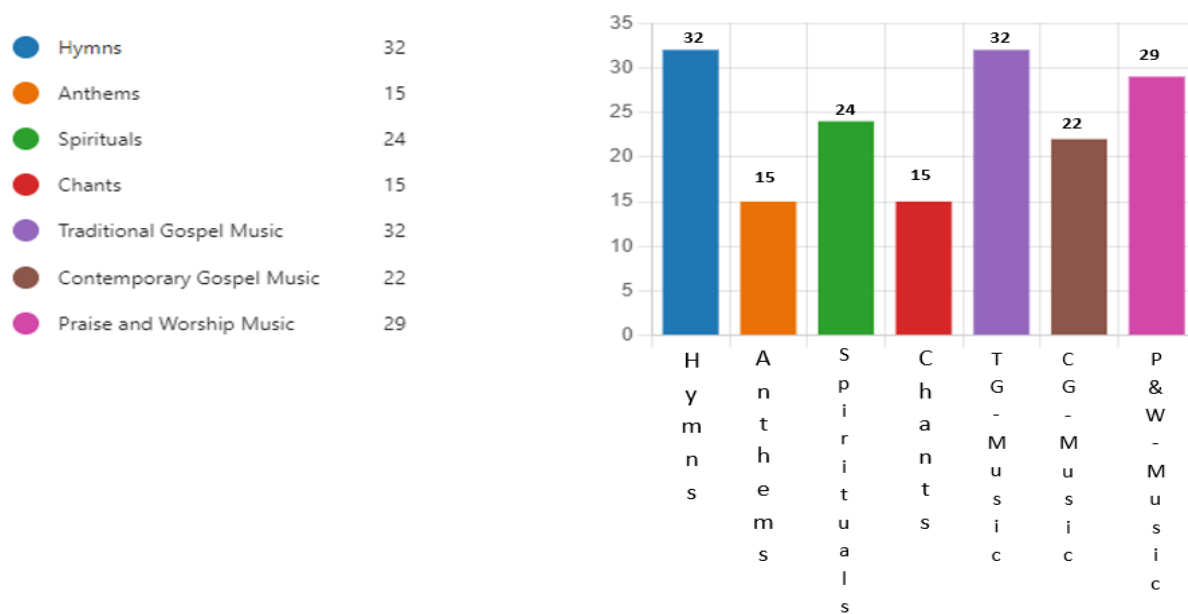


Figure 16. Preferred Music Style

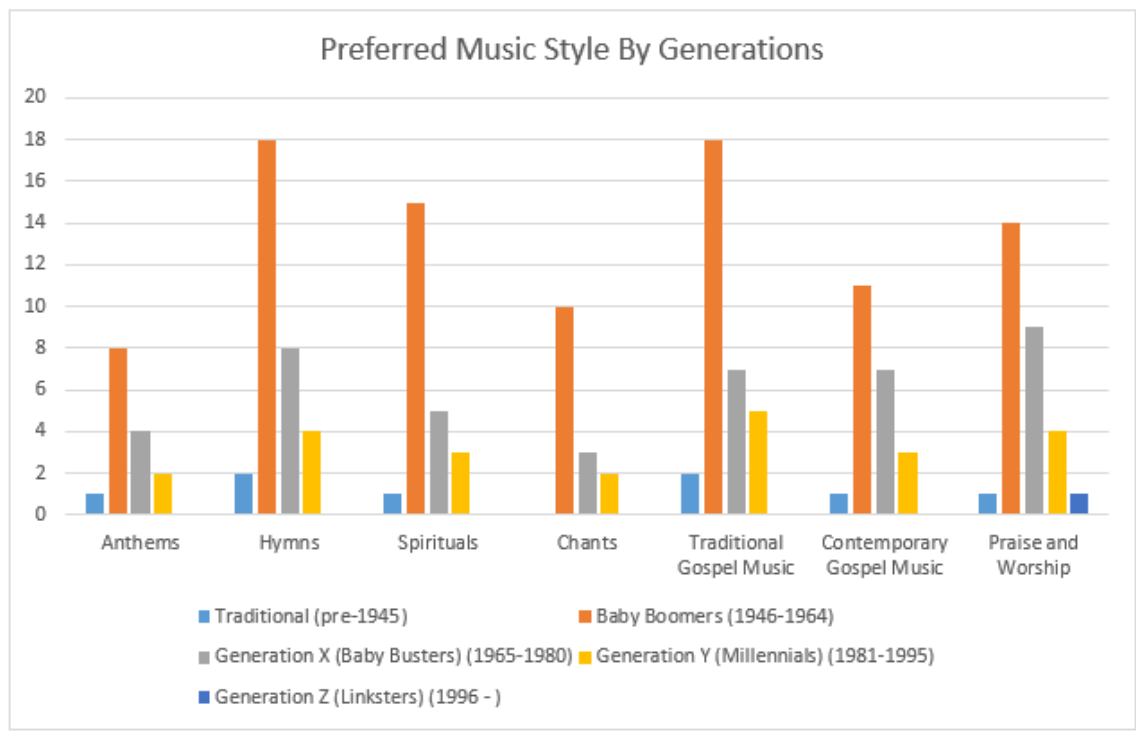


Figure 17. Preferred Music Style by Generations

### Question 13 – Which style of music do you prefer least? (Select all that apply)

Only 36 of 37 participants responded to this question. Figure 18 shows the top three least preferred styles of music as: anthems (15), chants (14), and, surprisingly, contemporary gospel music.

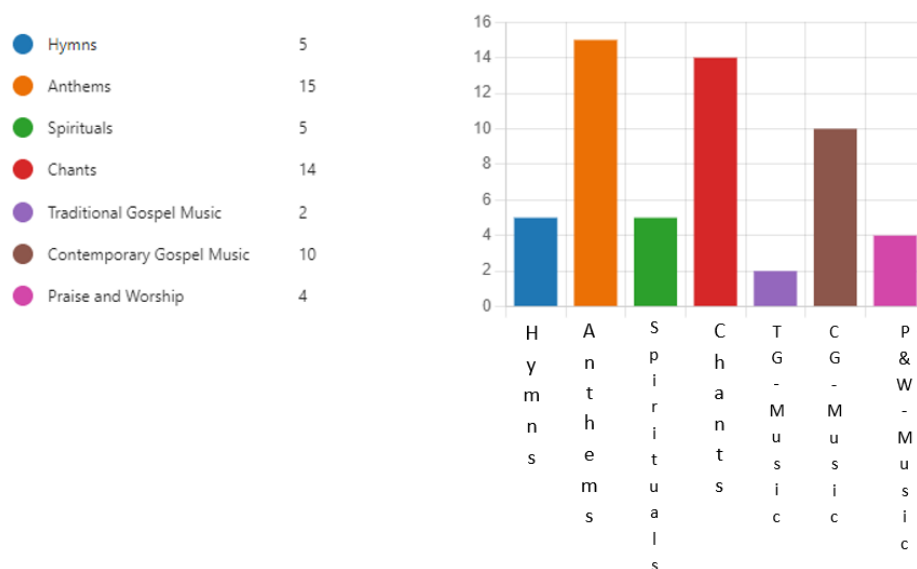


Figure 18. Least Preferred Style of Music

Figure 19 shows the music categories by generation. Baby Boomers exceeded the other generations by least preferring anthems, chants, contemporary gospel music, and praise and worship music (10).

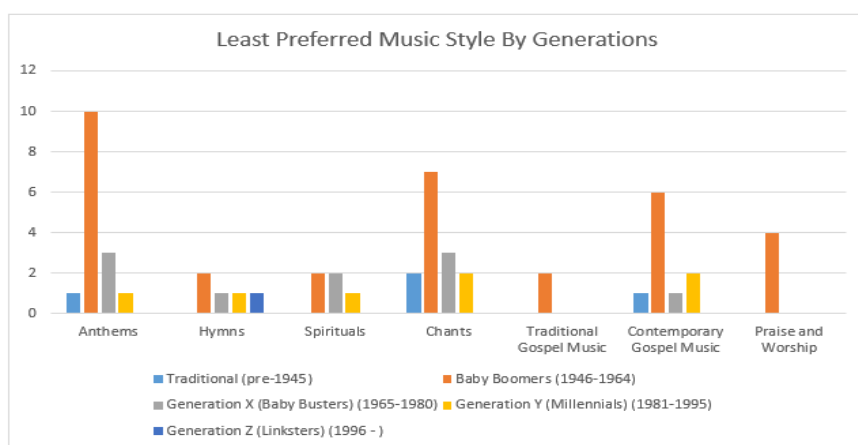


Figure 19. Least Preferred Music Style by Generations



## **Order of Service**

Questions 14 to 17 are open-ended questions about the order of service at participants' respective churches and youth participation in those worship services. Question 18 is a closed-ended question regarding using visual and fine arts during the worship service.

### **Question 14 – Describe what you like best about the flow of the order of service.**

There were only 35 responses to this question. The dominant theme was “organized.” This represented 43% of the respondents who best liked a structured, consistent, and flowing service. There were references to music (26%) but no substantive reasons, except for two of nine responses that they liked when the music aligned with the sermon topic. Below are a few responses.

*Respondent 4 (Gen Xer):* “It's well connected from scripture to the sermonic hymns, to the sermon.

*Respondent 15 (Gen Z):* “I enjoy the interaction it creates between members.”

*Respondent 26 (Baby Boomer):* “That it flows with no pauses and gets you in the right mind frame to receive the word.”

*Respondent 30 (Millennial):* “I appreciate short services. I appreciate less talking from all of the ministers. I value connectedness and congruence when the songs align with the sermon, kind of like a theme for the service.”

### **Question 15 – Describe what you like least about the flow of the order of service.**

There were only 35 responses to this question. The top issue was too much talking (26%), mainly attributed to announcements or pastoral remarks. Twenty-three percent of the respondents did not list anything or left the answer blank. Below are a few responses.

*Respondent 5 (Baby Boomer):* “The service is too long, most people attention span is 20 minutes; if you sing or preach longer than this you lose people attention.”

*Respondent 15 (Gen Z):* “A lot of repetitiveness and things that can be more time-consuming than they need to be.”

*Respondent 18 (Traditionalist):* “Elimination of offertory/prayer by Church Deacons.”

*Respondent 22 (Gen Xer):* “The part I like least is because it’s so structured it doesn’t leave room for the Holy Spirit to sit a while.”

*Respondent 27 (Millennial):* “The least thing I like about the flow of the service is when there is no order and everyone is doing what they want - which expresses an issue in leadership and training...The only time the order of service should be broken is when the Holy Spirit is high and present - not because we're out of alignment.”

**Question 16 – What recommendation would you make to change the worship service or the order of service?**

There were only 36 responses to this question. Eight respondents (23%) recommended shortening the amount of time talking (e.g., announcements and pastoral comments) or the length of the worship service. Six respondents (17%) suggested no changes. Respondent 28 (Gen Xer) wrote, “I would recommend that churches survey the demographics of their congregation to make sure that they are not catering to a specific group and neglecting another.” Two respondents recommended that children and young adults be used more in the service. Respondent 31 (Baby Boomer) wrote, “I really would like to see the Children Church and the young adults be more involved in regular church service. They need to know the flow of the service and be trained in positions they will hold in the future.” Below are a few additional comments.

*Respondent 19 (Gen Xer):* “Reduce talking and focus on praise and worship and the word. Spend more time practicing the hymns in preparation for worship. Highlight the Word, give more time to it.”

*Respondent 33 (Baby Boomer):* “I like simple flowing services - I come to hear the Word and how I can apply to my life and how I can get closer to God through daily living.”

*Respondent 30 (Millennial):* “Especially during this virtual season, keep everything as brief as possible.”

*Respondent 3 (Gen Z):* “Shorten it.”

**Question 17: Should Youth be used during the worship service to welcome guests, provide the offertory prayer, provide the altar prayer, serve as ushers, etc., and why?**

There were only 36 responses to this question. Thirty-four (94%) of the responses were “yes,” and two (6%) responses implied yes. The main reason for including youth in worship services was that it was a learning process for them. Next, youth are part of the community of believers. They are also the future of the church. And finally, using youth adds to the diversity of the congregation.

*Respondent 7 (Millennial):* “Yes, it bridges the gaps between generation. It makes the youth feel like they are needed and that they are appreciated. It also prepares them to be leaders in the church.”

*Respondent 15 (Gen Z):* “Yes, gives the church a more inviting feel.”

*Respondent 16 (Baby Boomer):* “Yes. It gives the youth good training, and it also caters to the youth audience. It encourages other youth to get involved.”

*Respondent 18 (Traditional):* “Yes, the youth are our greatest asset. If we do not involve the youth we risk losing our most valued asset.”

*Respondent 19 (Gen Xer):* “We all have much to offer the body of Christ, and including our youth is one way to bridge the divide between generations...to allow their "style" to be included. I believe inclusivity and diversity sets the forward-thinking and forward-moving congregation from the rest.”

**Question 18 – If visual and fine arts are incorporated into the worship service, what value do they add (i.e., mime, liturgical dance, poetry, video)?**

There were only 35 responses to this question. Thirty-four (94%) respondents believe that visual and fine arts contribute to worship expression (See Figure 20). Most of these are Baby Boomers (18), followed by Gen Xers (9). Only two respondents believe that they are a distraction.

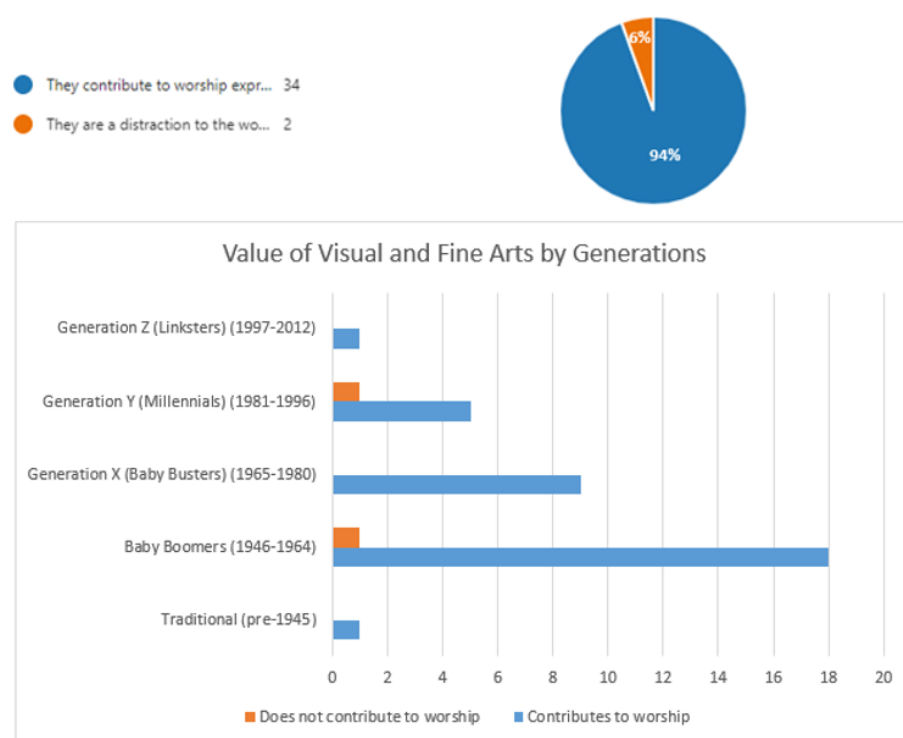


Figure 20. Value of Visual and Fine Arts

## General Worship Service Questions

Questions 19 through 21 pertain to general questions about the overall worship service.

### Question 19 – What do you consider an appropriate length for the worship service?

Of the respondents' five different lengths of worship service times, 49% (18) selected one hour and 30 minutes as an appropriate length (see Figure 21). Eight of them were Baby Boomers (44%)

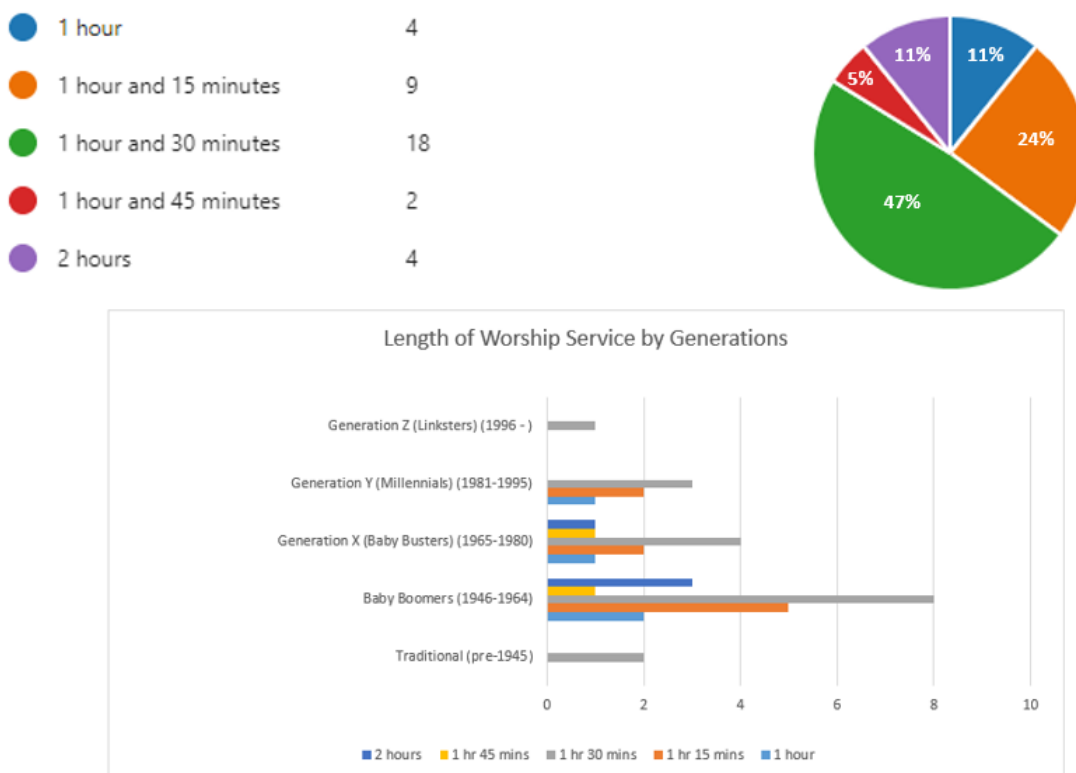


Figure 21. Length of Worship Service

### Question 20 – Select the response that best describes your thoughts about the length of worship service at your church.

This question is a follow-up to question 19. Most respondents (68%) selected the worship service as just right. Forty-eight percent of these persons were Baby Boomers (12) (see Figure

22). One Gen Z respondent and one Traditional respondent selected the worship service was too long.

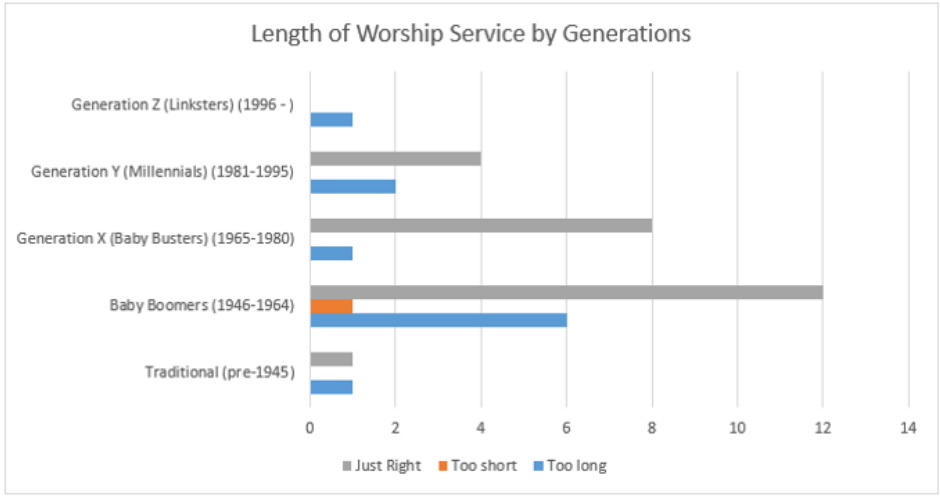
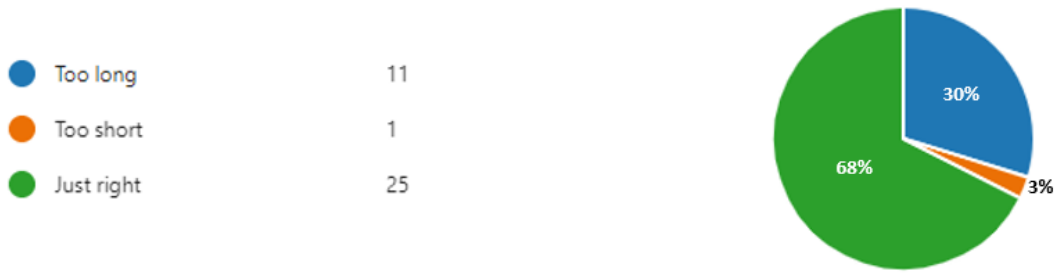


Figure 22. Length of Worship Service by Generations

**Question 21 – What is your preference for attire for Sunday morning worship?**

Thirteen of the respondents (35%) had no preference for what people wore to church, while 12 (32%) preferred that attendees would still wear the more formal “church attire” (see Figure 23).

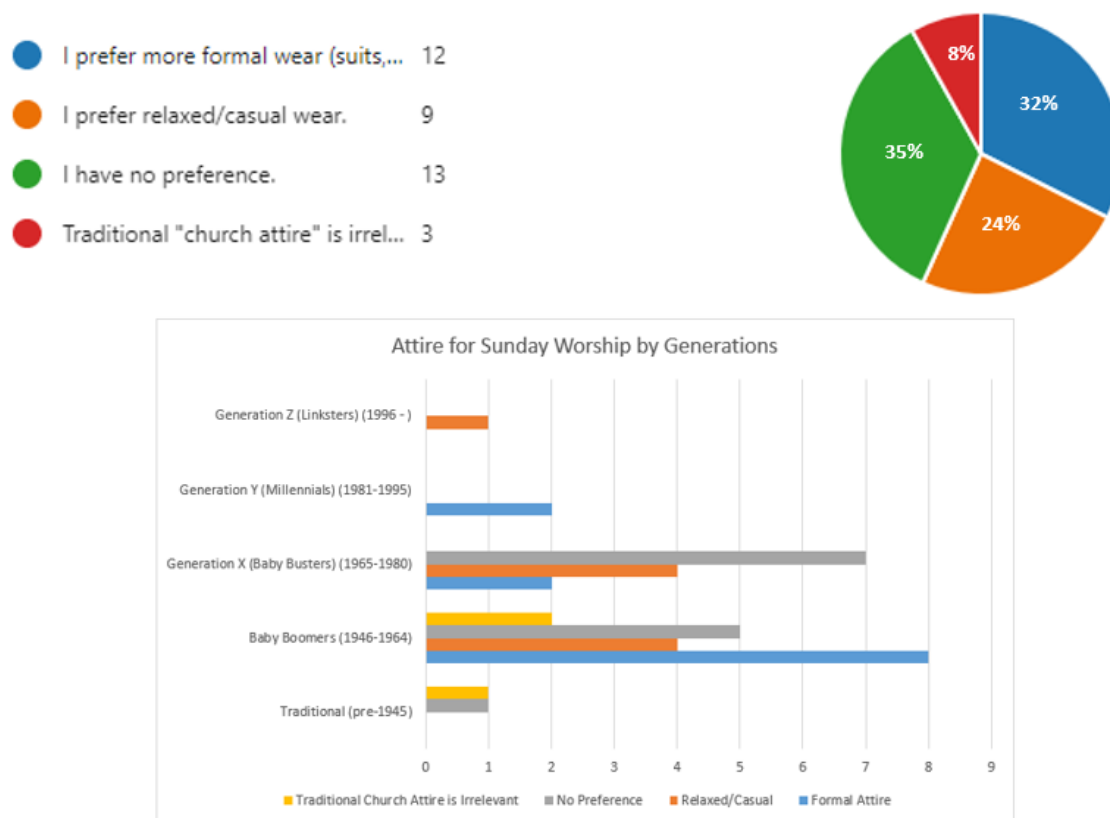


Figure 23. Attire for Sunday Worship

**Question 22: Provide a brief description of your overall view about worship at your church.**

There were only 35 responses to this open-ended question. Three of the responses noted issues about the worship service. Two of those responses pertained to a blended worship service or youth attendance.

*Respondent 12 (Baby Boomer):* “Pre-COVID; Our traditional service used both traditional and gospel music along with hymns and a few contemporary selections occasionally. We also incorporated Praise Teams. However, a lack of interest and participation caused them to wane.”

*Respondent 15 (Gen Z):* “The worship at New Calvary does its best to incorporate a younger feel, however with a small population of active and consistent youth that are in

high school or middle school to lead those groups it is hard to make that a reality. More often than not it ends up being adult members running the show with their own ideas rather than the youths own. Not to the fault of anyone specifically.”

Seven responses included comments about blended worship service and incorporating youth.

Below are three of those comments.

*Respondent 2 (Gen Xer):* “It is a blended worship and the staff reflects that. We are constantly attempting to bridge the gap by being creative and innovative but also using elements of worship that remind the generations of that they are familiar with.”

*Respondent 13 (Baby Boomer):* “Worship at the church that I most attend involves keeping as many members involved as possible. From the children all the [way] up to the senior citizens.”

*Respondent 27 (Millennial):* “I believe worship at my church is expanding. We are blending traditional and contemporary more often than usual, and it's been very receptive. The atmosphere shifts every Sunday, and I can truly say it's been a game-changer.”

### **Observation of Worship Service**

Due to New Calvary Baptist Church canceling in-person worship services in December 2020 because of the rise of COVID-19 cases in the local area, the Sunday services were pre-recorded with only the pastor, praise team members, musicians, and a couple of associate ministers present. There was no congregational interaction to observe. During the research period, the affected service dates were February 28, 2021, and March 7, 2021. They were modified to be no more than 90 minutes with only two complete songs (Praise and Worship and Sermonic Selection) conducive for a virtual audience watching the service on YouTube and Facebook. The songs blended traditional gospel music, praise and worship music, and



contemporary gospel music. The hymns used were instrumental, which the musicians played during the altar prayer. The singers and musicians were a mix of Baby Boomers (6), Gen Xers (2), Millennials (3), and Gen Z (1). The attire for the first service was casual. The Praise Team wore choir robes for the second service, which was Communion Sunday. Both sermons were structured by the guest minister and pastor of New Calvary to communicate biblical truths and make them relevant to current times so that youth and adults could understand the sermon. There was not enough demographic information on New Calvary's Facebook page and YouTube channel to analyze data on the viewers.

### Summary

This qualitative research project was designed to elicit information from participants to discover the differences and commonalities between six generations of worshipers in one service and use those findings to recommend ways for a church to be more inclusive of all ages. Those generations include Gen Z, Millennials, Gen Xers, Baby Boomers, and Traditional (representing the GI and Silent Generations, the oldest generational cohorts). The researcher created a questionnaire that included 22 closed-ended and open-ended questions and emailed a computer-generated link to participants to complete the survey online securely. The researcher also mailed a paper form to randomly selected New Calvary Baptist Church members for completion and return. The researcher was limited to observing pre-recorded worship services without the congregation being present due to COVID-19 attendance restrictions at New Calvary when the research was conducted. The church was also no longer available for use to conduct onsite interviews with members of the congregation. Although congregational observation was not possible, the researcher did observe what occurred during the taping of the two services to include the results in this chapter.

Because there was only one Gen Z participant and two Traditionalists, there were not enough responses from these groups to make conclusive assumptions about them. However, some of their answers were useful for consideration that was not necessarily exclusive to one generation. For example, respondent 18, a Traditionalist, recommended “greater involvement of youth in Sunday service” for changing the worship service (question 16). The Baby Boomers comprise the largest participating group and are twice as large as the Gen Xers, the second-largest participating group. This research did not uncover significant differences or obvious places of contention. However, respondent 19 (a Millennial) was very frank in providing a brief overview of worship at his church (question 22). He described it as “formulaic, monotonous, predictable, long, obligatory, in need of membership feedback for improvement.”

The researcher used NVivo Software for data coding and to help identify themes from the responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The resultant themes include (1) Worship Music, (2) Worship Flow, (3) Worship Time, (4) Worship Change, (5) Church Family, (6) Future Church, (7) Learning and Experience, and (7) Communication. Under “Church Family,” some responses to question 17 pertained to making the youth feel like they were a part of the body of Christ. They are a part of the community. “Congregations that embrace community as their primary core value are the most likely to be able to create authentic multi-generational events and worship, no matter what the liturgical tradition.”<sup>139</sup> Under “Communication,” some responses to questions 14 and 15 pertained to too much talking from announcements and pastoral remarks. Silence was detected in the survey from what the researcher expected to find, especially in question 22. Pre-pandemic, the youth of New Calvary would be escorted out of the sanctuary at a particular time in the worship service to attend

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<sup>139</sup>Sheppard and Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections*, 173, Nook.

“Children’s Church” in a different area of the building. Eventually, the parents could escort their children to “Children’s Church” before entering the sanctuary for the 11:00 a.m. service. Most respondents agreed that the youth should be used in the worship service (question 17). Another moment of silence in question 22 was from respondent 3 (a Baby Boomer), who responded that the worship service was “too secular, too much of the world vs worship.” This could pertain to praise and worship music because this was the least preferred style of music in question 15. There was no clarity in this response.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### Introduction

Chapter Five summarizes this thesis project, including an overview of the purpose and the research methodology. A synopsis of the survey study results is also included. Limitations of the research are further discussed. Finally, this chapter concludes with a recommendation for future study of multigenerations worshipping together.

### Summary of Study

Kevin Navarro States, “The worship service is the most important event in the local church, and the engine that drives all programming.”<sup>140</sup> Every week, Christians gather together as a community of believers to celebrate the awesomeness of a loving and merciful God, to hear the redemptive stories of Jesus Christ made applicable to today, to encourage one another in the faith, to sing together, to pray for one another, and to depart to serve as disciples of Jesus Christ in the community. Navarro suggests, “What lies at the heart of worship is God’s continual movement toward the peoples of the world and the continual response of the people of God in faith and obedience.”<sup>141</sup> This movement is God initiating a relationship. People in the church are expected to start and maintain healthy relationships with those inside and outside the church. This is possible when there is a healthy relationship with God. He initiated this relationship with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Vernon Whaley writes, “God created to establish *relationship* with those who are *like him* (see Genesis 1:26 NLT)—and because He loves us—

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<sup>140</sup> Kevin J. Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 13.

<sup>141</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old & New—Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), Loc 200, Kindle.

and loved us—even before we were born.”<sup>142</sup> This makes it possible for multiple generations to worship together.

The multigenerational concept of worship is a phenomenon that has been around for a while. It is a biblical concept seen throughout Scripture in the Old Testament. It is first noted in Exodus 10:8-9, where Moses tells Pharaoh that the Hebrews would be taking all their young, old, and children to worship God, including their animals. This gathering of the whole family in worship was a repeated practice for feasts and festivals as prescribed in the Covenant. They also gathered when the Israelites were admonished to return to God, as was the case in the book of Joel. Joel admonishes the people of Judah to return to God. In Joel 1:14, New International Version, he says, “Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land” (New International Version). He is even more specific in Joel 2:15-16a about who should be in attendance. “Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast.” The multigenerational concept of worship is also seen in the New Testament. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus welcomed children to be brought to him after the disciples tried to stop the people from getting them. “Jesus said, ‘Let the Little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’” Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross write, “In the early church as a whole, the generations met together in homes. Several whole families, including the extended family and household servants, came together as the church ... (Acts 2:46-47; 4:32-35; 16:31-34).”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 5, Kindle.

<sup>143</sup> Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 83.

There must be intentionality in allowing all people to be present in the same space. Church leaders must ask themselves, “Is what we do inviting to everyone of all ages or is what we do in worship appealing to only one or two generations?” Church leadership must create a safe space where people can feel validated and not be afraid to have open, honest dialogue that encourages constructive feedback. Within the past twenty years, this has sometimes become a challenge because of multiple generations interacting together, each with diverse cultural and religious values. Benjamin Windle writes, “People now live thirty years longer than they once did. In 1900, the average life span was forty-eight; today, it’s seventy-eight ... In previous eras, there were only three generations.”<sup>144</sup> Today, there are seven generations. They include the GI Generation (Builders-Traditionalists), the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers (Boomers), Generation X (Gen Xers), Generation Y (Millennials), Generation Z (Gen Zers), and Generation Alpha (Gen Alpha). Some writers combine the GI and Silent generations into one group.

Jason Gardner states, “There is resistance to change precisely because cultural shift has accelerated, creating too much of a distance between generations for the older generation to catch up.”<sup>145</sup> These differences have caused generational gaps within some congregations, but these differences should not cause division. Ray Crawford, Jr. writes, “Each Sunday, the church has a unique opportunity to build bridges between generations and to encourage the expression of multiple generations in the worship of God.”<sup>146</sup> People generally desire to be a part of

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<sup>144</sup> Benjamin Windle, *8 Innovations To Leading Millennials: How Millennials Can Grow Your Church and Change the World* (Australia: The Thrive Co, 2019), 17.

<sup>145</sup> Jason Gardner, introduction to *Mend the Gap: Can the Church Reconnect the Generations?* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>146</sup> Ray Crawford, Jr., "For all Generations: The Experience and Expression of Intergenerational Worship." (DMin diss., Order No. 3261122, Drew University, 2007), 10. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/304863420?accountid=12085>.

organizations that accept them. Barna Group reports, “The church has a role to play as a welcoming, stabilizing community for those who are struggling to find their place to belong.”<sup>147</sup>

When this is not done, there is the potential for members to either leave in search of a church where they do feel welcome, leave and not join another church, or remain feeling unfulfilled spiritually and relationally. Ray Crawford, Jr. writes, “Though the mix of generational expressions in worship can create discomfort at times, the church must hold fast to a vision of itself as the united people of God, a vision proclaimed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2.”<sup>148</sup>

An impressive dynamic at New Calvary Baptist Church is that the leadership is taking steps toward building bridges between the generations through a series of small group meetings and leadership training sessions. They recognize that if the church succeeds in developing its inclusive worship services, attracting new members, and being effective in the community, they must understand that “we can build bridges rather than barriers between the generations and thus create community.”<sup>149</sup> Generational differences do not have to continue to cause conflicts if each generational cohort is open to accommodating the rich diversity among them. This means that the members must be open to dialogue with each other, old and young generations. Gil Rendle states, “Leaders too often go out of their way to head off conversations about differing expectations in worship rather than helping members and participants to engage in and sustain essential conversations about how the congregation will now behave.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Barna, *Making Space for Millennials: A Blueprint for your Culture, Ministry, Leadership and Facilities* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2014), 18.

<sup>148</sup> Crawford, abstract in “For All Generations,” i.

<sup>149</sup> Edward Hammet, Paul L. Anderson, and Cornell Thomas. *Reaching People Under 30 While Keeping People Over 60: Creating Community Across Generations*. Danvers (Danvers, MA: Christian Board of Publication, 2015), loc 1295, Kindle.

<sup>150</sup> Gil Rendle, “‘Intergenerational’ as a way of Seeing,” in *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 59, Kindle.

The leadership of New Calvary does not minimize these sometimes-vast differences. Change is not easy, mainly traditional values maintained by the GI Generation, Silent Generation, and Boomer Generation; contemporary values held by some Boomers and Generation X; and newer values exhibited by Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. Jason Gardner writes, “There are many obstacles to overcome in creating a united worshipping family of God, not least the way contemporary secular society has served to diminish the role of elder generations and has often subjected young people to unhelpful social stigma and stereotyping.”<sup>151</sup> We live in a fast-paced society where change seems to be a constant and requires innovation. Craig Kent Miller suggests that innovation “doesn’t throw everything away and make a brand-new start. Instead, the innovative approach looks at what has long-lasting value and considers ways to build on what we already have.”<sup>152</sup> Multigenerational worship requires intentionality and a concerted effort by all the generations working together to overcome any obstacles that may surface at any given moment.

In many churches, Sunday morning is an exciting time for Christians to celebrate and worship God together, giving thanks for salvation through Jesus Christ. David writes in Psalm 122:1-2, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.' Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem." The psalmist is expressing jubilation about the people of God traveling long distances and finally arriving at their beloved city and the central place of worship after an exhaustive journey. Mark D. Futato writes, "In Jerusalem stood 'the house of the LORD,' and to arrive at the house of the Lord was to arrive at the destiny for which we were

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<sup>151</sup> Gardner, *Mend the Gap*, 200.

<sup>152</sup> Craig Kent Miller, "Getting Older and Younger at Warp Speed" in *Gen2Gen: Sharing Jesus Across the Generations*, Editors Craig Kennet Miller et al., (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2014), 30.



created: the presence of God.”<sup>153</sup> While Christians can experience the presence of God anywhere because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and God’s Spirit dwelling within them (1 Corinthians 3:16a), there is something special and unique about gathering together in a church. Derek Kidner writes, “There is a miniature of this gladness in any meeting for true worship (expressed particularly in the ‘Song for the Sabbath,’ Ps. 92); but here the sight of the Lord’s house is the climax of a longer and stiffer pilgrimage than a ‘sabbath day’s journey.’”<sup>154</sup> Pilgrimages are no longer necessary today because of the central location of most churches to congregants’ homes and the use of modern transportation. “Congregations are discovering that bringing generations together provides benefits and blessings on a variety of levels—for the congregation as a whole, for families, for individuals of all ages, and for the wider community.”<sup>155</sup>

For many Christians today, worship is viewed as taking place on Sunday. “Christian worship was held at different times and places than Jewish worship. The Jewish sabbath as the day of worship was fulfilled and observed by Christ; however, the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, became the Christian day of worship in commemoration of the resurrection.”<sup>156</sup> The first biblical account of an act of worship occurred in Genesis 4:3-4 when Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord. The Bible does not disclose when and why they began this ritual. Their parents, Adam and Eve, could have passed it down to them. Whaley writes, “But Adam

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<sup>153</sup> Mark D. Futato, “The Book of Psalms,” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 378.

<sup>154</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 469.

<sup>155</sup> Kathie Amidei, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto, *Generations Together: Caring Praying, Learning, Celebrating, & Serving Faithfully* (Naugatuck, CT: Lifelong Faith Publications 2014), loc 698, Kindle.

<sup>156</sup> Segler and Bradley, *Christian Worship*, 22, Kindle.

and Eve, the first to be afforded the awesome privilege of worshipping God, practiced perfect worship. And what's more, they did so in a perfect place."<sup>157</sup> God banished them from this perfect place, the Garden of Eden, for their sin (Gen. 3), yet God still maintained a relationship with them and their descendants. Genesis 5:22 reads, "And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters."

In time, other men built altars to the Lord, beginning with Noah (Gen. 8:20), Abraham (Gen. 12:8), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), and Jacob (Gen. 35:6-7). In each instance, God initiated the relationships by revealing himself to them. In time, God instructed Moses to build a portable tabernacle where His presence could dwell as the Israelites traveled from Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. "The instructions in Exodus 25-31 are presented as further revelation to Moses during his time alone with God on the top of Sinai. The Israelites were to bring the finest materials as a freewill offering to the LORD, for the construction of a sanctuary."<sup>158</sup> Finally, Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, a permanent place of God's presence among the Israelites (1 Kings 6). "The temple signified that there was a future for Israel as the people of God because the building itself expressed the continuation of God's covenant promise to be with them and bless them (8:56-51)."<sup>159</sup>

### Findings of the Study

The data from this research was gathered from the responses of 37 study participants to a survey the researcher created. The research was conducted for two weeks, and participants either completed the survey anonymously online or completed a paper survey and returned it

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<sup>157</sup> Whaley, *Called to Worship*, 21, Kindle.

<sup>158</sup> Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 30, Kindle.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

anonymously to the researcher via mail. The data analysis charts were automatically generated by Microsoft 365 Form application from the survey responses. Additional data analysis charts were created manually by the researcher using Microsoft Excel. Data coding was accomplished using NVivo Software.

The Boomers were the largest participant study group in this research project, followed by Gen Xers. Before the COVID-19 Pandemic started spreading in the United States in 2020, the most recognizable attendees at New Calvary Baptist Church Sunday worship services were members 50 years and older. The average attendance at Sunday worship services was about 300-350 persons. A few Millennials and fewer youth were in attendance, but New Calvary had an active youth ministry. Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof acknowledge, “A visitor to the weekly service of almost any church or synagogue will come away with many impressions. One in particular is likely, that the worshipers are more of one age or generation than another.”<sup>160</sup> In-person attendance was canceled in March 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions nationwide, resulting in business and institution closures to reduce infection rates from the virus. In-person worship resumed at New Calvary in May 2021 as the government lifted closure restrictions. Since then, more members have returned to Sunday worship services; however, the attendance is between 100 and 125 persons.

Most attendees are still Boomers and Gen Xers, with very few Millennials and youth. Carrol and Roof write, “Older people typically outnumber younger people in regular service. Historic ‘mainline’ Protestant congregations particularly have an imbalance of people sixty years of age and older.”<sup>161</sup> Currently, the average weekly attendance for youth at New Calvary is five

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<sup>160</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 1.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

or fewer. The church leadership has planned several strategic planning meetings to address this issue and to implement plans for growing the attendance of Millennials, Gen Zers, and families with children (who are Generation Alpha) in 2023.

In their book *Congregational Connections: Uniting Six Generations in the Church*, Carroll Anne Sheppard and Nancy Burton Dilliplane write, “Yet some congregations seem to be thriving. Those with stable multi-generational attendance, (especially when these are family groupings linked through multiple generations) are working out ways of dealing with the issues that arise.”<sup>162</sup> The biblical model for the church is based on the family being present for worship gatherings. Allen and Ross write, “In the early church as a whole, the generations met together in homes. Several whole families, including the extended family and household servants, came together as the church. All generations met together, breaking bread, praying together, ministering to one another in the context of the home (Acts 2:46-47; 4:32-35; 16:31-34).”<sup>163</sup> The family is an extension of the church and vice versa. In describing a healthy family and church, Frank Gillespie writes, “Many worship leaders use one analogy for corporate worship: the family dinner table, where grandparents, parents, and children all come together to eat, talk and enjoy fellowship. Some may help prepare the food, others set the table, and others may just sit and eat. Nevertheless, everyone has value, and the meal would be incomplete if even one were missing.”<sup>164</sup>

The preferred worship service times in this research project were 8:00 a.m. followed by 11:00 a.m. Only two respondents expressed worship service style preferences, which were

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<sup>162</sup> Sheppard and Dilliplane, *Congregational Connections*, 14, Nook.

<sup>163</sup> Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 83.

<sup>164</sup> Frank Richard Gillespie, "Building Healthy Families Through Intergenerational Worship Ministry." (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2022), 103, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3624>.

familiar and traditional at the 8:00 a.m. service. Another reason given for the 8:00 a.m. preferred worship service time was that people were early risers, and it was a shorter service. For the 11:00 a.m. service, there was only one reference to the style of worship. The respondent preferred a contemporary musical style. Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, New Calvary had two Sunday worship services at 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. from the second Sunday of September through the fourth Sunday of June. During the Summer, there was only one worship service, which started at 10:00 a.m. New Calvary's 8:00 a.m. service lasted from about one hour to one hour and 15 minutes, with fewer songs by the choir and congregation. The 11:00 a.m. service lasted from about one hour and 30 minutes to about one hour and 45 minutes and included a period of Praise and Worship. New Calvary currently has one Sunday worship service that starts at 10:00 a.m.

The preferred worship style in this thesis project was blended, with Boomers preferring this style the most, followed by the Gen Xers and Millennials, each with identical responses. In his book, *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, Elmer Towns writes, "Whereas most Protestant churches will do many of the same things in worship or ministry-pray, sing, collect money, preach and so on-the way these things are done and the value that worshipers give to them make them distinctive."<sup>165</sup> The researcher was expecting more survey respondents to prefer a traditional style. In his thesis, "Blended Worship: A Future Model of Worship for the Presbyterian Churches in South Korea," Phillip Lee reports, "Response about the worship style was relatively even. The highest percentage, 45%, responded that their churches feature the blended style of worship, followed by traditional worship at 27%."<sup>166</sup> The

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<sup>165</sup> Towns, *Putting an End to Worship War*, loc 184, Kindle.

<sup>166</sup> Phillip Lee, "Blended Worship: A Future Model of Worship for the Presbyterian Churches in South Korea." (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2014), 72, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ddu&AN=6EF43B5DDDC496EE&site=ehost-live>.

preferred styles of music for the researcher's thesis project were hymns, traditional gospel music, and praise and worship music. Again, the Boomers had the most preferred results, followed by the Gen Xers and the Millennials. Carroll and Roof write, "The choice of liturgy and music is more than a preference, it is a symbolic expression of identity and religious meaning implicit within that identity."<sup>167</sup>

Although music is only one aspect of the worship service, it is an important topic related to "worship wars." Towns suggests that "The area of controversy or tension in today's church deals with the disagreement over the way people worship. While some of the disagreement may have its roots in theology, probably most of the disagreement flows out of methodology."<sup>168</sup> The worship style preferences of many Christians are generally developed from attending worship services as children through adulthood. Allen and Ross explain, "In intergenerational worship settings children will see their parents and others worship, they will make sense of their experiences with God, and they will come to know God better."<sup>169</sup> Many Boomers and Gen Xers experience a sense of nostalgia when they are in a traditional worship setting or a blended or contemporary worship setting, and they hear a hymn or traditional gospel song, reminding them of "how things used to be." McGee writes in his dissertation, "Everyone has a preferred taste in music. The objective is to provide worshipers authentic musical vocabularies consistent with their unique cultural setting while encouraging them to embrace a willingness to set aside their own personal stylistic preferences in deference to the needs of others."<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 10.

<sup>168</sup> Towns, *Putting An End To Worship Wars*, loc 752, Kindle.

<sup>169</sup> Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Worship*, 194.

<sup>170</sup> Monty Boyd McGee. "Serving the Body of Christ in Corporate Worship: An Apologetic for Embracing Multiple Styles of Music." (DMin, diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 2.

Allen and Ross agree that blending music styles is necessary for intergenerational worship. The responses in this thesis project suggest that most Boomer, Gen Xer, and Millennial survey respondents also agree. They write, “To insist on traditional hymnody entirely, ignoring all worship music written in the last several decades, assumes an elitist historical stance that ignores the fact that God is still at work among twentieth- and twenty-first-century believers, pouring out new songs about old truths.”<sup>171</sup> They also explain that the same is true regarding contemporary music being used exclusively. Worshipers should be reminded of the rich musical and theological legacy of music decades and centuries old and the foundation for modern worship. Lee comments about his research, “According to the result, 70% of respondents’ churches distinguish the style of worship between the young and old generation. The result means that there is a generation gap in churches, and thus they hold separate worship services to avoid conflict between the generations.”<sup>172</sup>

Most of the study participants in this research project responded that the youth should be used in the worship service. Howard Vanderwell writes, “As a society we now recognize the rights of children—rights that were not considered for centuries before. So congregations and pastors are expected to recognize the children, include the children in their references and illustrations, and provide ‘sermons’ for children.”<sup>173</sup> Churches can show appreciation for the youth by allowing them to participate in the worship service with the adults. This is believed to encourage other youth to become more involved. In his thesis project, Peter Walter Rehwaldt writes, “Children are often visual props around whom adults act, they disappear from the scene,

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<sup>171</sup> Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Worship*, 196.

<sup>172</sup> Lee, “Blended Worship,” 86.

<sup>173</sup> Howard Vanderwell, “A New Issue for A New Day,” In *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, 1-16. Edited by Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 7, Kindle.

and their voices are almost completely silent. And yet, thankfully they remain, resiliently unwilling to disappear and be completely silent.”<sup>174</sup> The question most asked at New Calvary is, “Where are the children?” Jason Gardner asks a series of questions in his book *Mend The Gap: Can The Church Reconnect The Generations?*: “Are young people singing in the choir, handing out communion, doing the Bible reading, creating the PowerPoint slides for the sermon or notices?”<sup>175</sup> If children are missing in worship services, the answers to Gardner’s questions will partially explain why they are absent. They generally enjoy being around other children and are more prone to attend a church where more children are actively involved in the worship service or other activities.

Bridging the gap between the generations starts with including youth in the worship service and allowing them to express themselves with worship styles they can relate to. Edward Hammett, Paul L. Anderson, and Cornell Thomas write, “Many churches today want to reach the younger generations—Millennials and Gen X and Y. However, most seem to want the youth to change to the existing leadership’s core beliefs, values, and traditions without much, if any, conversation, much less negotiation.”<sup>176</sup> Another explanation for so few children in many churches today is that many parents do not require their children to attend church as the parents of Boomers did when they were children. They allow their children to decide about attending church rather than forcing them to go. In this newfound freedom, some youth in society today are

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<sup>174</sup> Peter Walter Rehwaldt, "Let all the People Say "Amen!": A Multigenerational Understanding of Rite, Hymnody, and Preaching." (DMin diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2005), 217, In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/304999739?accountid=12085>.

<sup>175</sup> Jason Gardner, *Mend The Gap: Can The Church Reconnect The Generations?* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 181.

<sup>176</sup> Hammett, Anderson, and Thomas, *Reaching People Under 30*, loc 1272, Kindle.



emboldened to challenge adult authority, even in the church. Many adults in the church, including ministry leaders, would rather not confront today's youth to avoid a confrontation. Gardner writes, "The problem is a breakdown in communication between old and young generations. The answer the church has found is not to equip the older generation to relate better to the younger, but to appoint someone else to do it on their behalf."<sup>177</sup> Having a youth leader or youth pastor who can relate to youth is essential. Still, it is also necessary for the older generation to work with the youth leader or youth pastor to develop ways to effectively communicate with the youth. Gardner points out, "It seems that young generations are only ever given authority to *reach* young generations, and rarely to adapt church so that everybody can reach other."<sup>178</sup> Then there is the reality of the American society existing in a post-Christian era where the "nones," the religiously unaffiliated, are reported to be the fastest growing group. James Emery writes, "At the time I completed my book *The Rise of the Nones*, the nones made up one out of every five Americans, which made them the second largest religious group in the United States—second only to Catholics."<sup>179</sup>

In this research project, there was an almost even split between study participants who preferred the more formal "church attire" and those who had no preference. Most Baby Boomers preferred the more formal attire, while most Gen Xers had no preference. Surprisingly, two Baby Boomers and one Traditionalist believe the formal church attire is irrelevant. The way people dress for Sunday worship service can be a source of conflict between the older and younger generations, as some of the more senior members view the formal Sunday attire as "reverencing

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<sup>177</sup> Gardner, *Mend the Gap*, 149.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>179</sup> James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 21, Kindle.

God” with their best. The younger generations view attending Sunday worship services as a matter of the heart, whereas God is more concerned with how they love Him and one another than He is about what people wear to church. In one of the churches Carroll and Roof researched, they write, “Dress at the services is very casual, mostly shorts or jeans and T-shirts. Worship leaders, including the pastors, also often wear shorts and T-shirts.”<sup>180</sup> Although members of New Calvary wear formal “church attire,” business casual, jeans and T-shirts, and shorts, they would be considered inappropriate attire for Sunday service.

#### Limitations of Study

There were several limitations to this thesis project. First, the survey length was only two weeks. Of the 114 surveys emailed or mailed to study participants, 32% (37) were completed. The goal was to receive at least 50%; additional time may have increased the opportunity to receive more completed surveys. Second, onsite interviews with prospective study participants were not conducted due to the closure of New Calvary Baptist Church because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, the researcher should have used Zoom, FaceTime, or Messenger Video as an alternative for conducting face-to-face interviews. Fourth, the study's Traditionalists (Builder and Silent Generations) and Generation Z were underrepresented. The researcher received two completed surveys from Traditionalists and one from a Gen Zer. Random addresses were selected to mail surveys since the researcher was permitted to use New Calvary's membership directory with names omitted. The researcher also did not know the ages of prospective study participants contacted by text, phone, or email.

Fifth, this research was limited to predominantly African American churches. The

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<sup>180</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 188.

researcher contacted the study participants from the same local, state, regional, and national Christian organizations. Sixth, 86% of the study participants (32) were Baptists. The researcher anticipated a diverse representation across denominational lines since several organizations have members from several denominations, including the Church of God In Christ, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Presbyterian, Church of Christ (Disciples of Christ), and others.

#### Suggestions for Future Study

The primary recommendation for further study is to include more people from Generation Z and Traditionalists as part of the generational cohorts to study. The researcher had no face-to-face interaction with members of New Calvary or other affiliated organizations due to COVID-19 restrictions and closures during the time of this thesis project. Only one of the 37 anonymous survey respondents was from Generation Z, and two were from Traditionalists. This can be accomplished in the researcher's ministry assignment by asking members of the Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the Golden Ages Ministry (members 55 and older) to participate in interviews. As of 2023, the oldest Gen Zer is 27. James Emery White writes, "They are experiencing radical changes in technology and understandings of family, sexuality, and gender. They live in multigenerational households, and the fastest-growing demographic within their age group, multiracial."<sup>181</sup> The youngest Traditionalist is 78.

During the initial stages of developing this thesis project, the focus was on understanding the particularities of the different adult generations and on how to make multigenerational worship effective in the church, thus having inclusive worship of people of all ages. Some writers used the terms "multigenerational" and "intergenerational" interchangeably. The focus of

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<sup>181</sup> White, *Meet Generation Z*, 38-39, Kindle.

intergenerational is on creating ways for the generations to interact with one another rather than just being in the same space with no interaction. There is limited research on multigenerational worship, but in the last decade, more thesis and dissertation studies have been conducted by seminary students to add to the body of work on this topic, as well as intergenerational worship and Christian formation.

### Conclusion

This thesis project aims to provide a worship model that facilitates multiple generations' worship styles and preferences within a church congregation. Vanderwell points out, "For a time churches tried to ignore the differences of the generations and assumed it was a matter they need not address."<sup>182</sup> But as people began living longer, churches grew from being three-generation churches to having seven generations worshipping together in some churches. Each generational cohort may have characteristics that distinguish them from each other. Still, Vanderwell states, "Each generation has the same significance before the face of God and in the worshipping congregation."<sup>183</sup> Paul says it this way in Romans 2:11, "For God does not show favoritism." Just as businesses are studying ways of managing a multigenerational workforce, so too must the church. There is no "one-size-fits-all" remedy for church leaders seeking to grow the local churches spiritually and relationally. Carroll and Roof suggest that "The blended congregation, or one that is consciously trying to become multigenerational in program, style, and structure, best reflects not just the values of the great religious traditions but also the goal of Dychtwald holds forth as so important for us in the twenty-first century: caring, sharing, and mentoring

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<sup>182</sup> Vanderwell, "A New Issue," 8, Kindle.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 11, Kindle.

across all age groups.”<sup>184</sup> Ken Dychtwald is a social analyst and gerontologist who has written several books on aging.

Creating space for multigenerational worship will be challenging and requires intentional investment by the members. Change continues in every facet of life, and it occurs in the church, sometimes with feelings of uncomfortableness. God is relational and expects the Christian community to intentionally maintain healthy relationships with one another no matter the changes. Generational division can be mended when the generations within a congregation create a culture that embraces a healthy relationship so that everyone can feel included in worship. Carroll and Roof write, “The congregation has little choice but to ‘work at’ creating community, if in fact it is to overcome such a legacy and compete with other social agencies.”<sup>185</sup> New Calvary must cultivate a culture where everyone, from the toddler to the octogenarian, feels they are family and are seen and heard.

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<sup>184</sup> Carroll and Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds*, 209.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix A: Worship Service Survey 2021

# Worship Service Survey 2021

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**1. What is your age?**

- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old
- 75 years or older

**2. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**3. Which generation were you born in?**

- GI (before 1926)
- Silent (1927-1945)
- Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- Generation X (Baby Busters) (1965-1980)
- Generation Y (Millennials) (1981-1995)
- Generation Z (Linksters) (1996 - )

**4. Please specify your ethnicity.**

- White or Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African America
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What denomination is your church?**

- Baptist
- Church of God in Christ
- Methodist: United, AME, AMEZ, CME
- Apostolic
- Reformed Zion United Apostolic Churches of America (RZUA)
- Presbyterian

- Catholic
- Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW)
- Church of Christ (Holiness) USA
- United Church of Christ
- Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**6. How long have you been a member?** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. What are the service times for your church? (Pick all that apply.)**

- 7:30 a.m.
- 8:00 a.m.
- 9:00 a.m.
- 9:30 a.m.
- 10:00 a.m.
- 10:30 a.m.
- 11:00 a.m.
- Other time (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Which service do you attend? (Pick all that apply)**

- 7:30 a.m.
- 8:00 a.m.
- 9:00 a.m.
- 9:30 a.m.
- 10:00 a.m.
- 10:30 a.m.
- 11:00 a.m.
- Other time (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Which service do you prefer to attend and why?**

**10. How often do you attend Sunday worship service?**

- Once a month
- Twice a month
- Three times a month
- Four times a month
- Every Sunday

**11. What is your preferred worship service style?**

- Traditional
- Contemporary with Praise and Worship
- Blended
- No particular preference

**12. Which style of music do you prefer most? (Select all that apply)**

- Hymns
- Anthems
- Spirituals
- Chants
- Traditional Gospel Music
- Contemporary Gospel Music
- Praise and Worship Music

**13. Which style of music do you prefer least? (Select all that apply)**

- Hymns
- Anthems
- Spirituals
- Chants
- Traditional Gospel Music
- Contemporary Gospel Music
- Praise and Worship Music

**14. Describe what you like best about the flow of the order of service.**

**15. Describe what you like least about the flow of the order of service.**

**16. What recommendation would you make to change the worship service or the order of service?**

**17. Should youth be used during the worship service to welcome guests, provide the offertory prayer, provide the altar prayer, serve as ushers, etc., and why?**

**18. If visual and fine arts are incorporated into the worship service, what value do they add (i.e., mime, liturgical dance, poetry, video)?**

- They contribute to worship expression.
- They are a distraction to the worship expression.

**19. What do you consider an appropriate length for the worship service?**

- 1 hour
- 1 hour and 15 minutes
- 1 hour and 30 minutes
- 1 hour and 45 minutes
- 2 hours

**20. Select the response that best describes your thoughts about the length of the worship service at your church.**

- Too long
- Too short
- Just right

**21. What is your preference for attire for Sunday morning worship?**

- I prefer more formal dress (suits, shirts/ties, dresses).
- I prefer relaxed/casual dress.
- I have no preference.
- Traditional "church attire" is irrelevant.

**22. Provide a brief description of your overall view about worship at your church.**

Appendix B: Site Approval Request



December 6, 2020

Mr. Willie Moody



Dear Mr. Moody:

This is a letter of approval for your request to conduct research at New Calvary Baptist Church as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree from the School of Divinity at Liberty University, as well as contact members of our staff and church to invite them to participate in your research study.

We congratulate you on your progress in your doctoral studies and are here to support you in your research project. We are praying for you and look forward to reading the results of your completed project.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact our Executive Pastor, Rev. Byron Harris, at [redacted] or [redacted].

Sincerely,



William Marcus Small, D.Min.  
Senior Pastor





## Appendix C: Membership List Access Approval



December 8, 2020

Mr. Willie Moody



Dear Mr. Willie Moody:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled "Worship and the Multigenerational Divide: A Study on Inclusive Worship in the Church," we have decided to grant you permission to access our membership list/contact our faculty/staff and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

[The requested data WILL BE STRIPPED of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.]

[The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.]

[I/We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.]

Sincerely,



Byron L. Hays  
Executive Pastor  
New Calvary Baptist Church

## Appendix D: IRB Approval

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 25, 2021

Willie Moody  
William Crawley

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-168 Worship and the Generational Divide: A Study of Inclusive Worship in the Church

Dear Willie Moody, William Crawley:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix E: IRB Modification Approval

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 19, 2021

Willie Moody  
William Crawley

Re: Modification - IRB-FY20-21-168 Worship and the Generational Divide: A Study of Inclusive Worship in the Church

Dear Willie Moody, William Crawley:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has rendered the decision below for IRB-FY20-21-168 Worship and the Generational Divide: A Study of Inclusive Worship in the Church.

Decision: Exempt

Your request to no longer interview participants and to instead utilize anonymous surveys has been approved. Thank you for submitting your revised study documents for our review and documentation. Your revised, stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study in Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for complying with the IRB's requirements for making changes to your approved study. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We wish you well as you continue with your research.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix F: Recruitment Letter Template

October 1, 2020

Mr. John Doe  
Director of Worship and Arts  
Mount Zion Baptist Church  
456 Circle Lane  
Anywhere, USA 123454

Dear Mr. Doe:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry in Worship. The purpose of my research is to learn why there is division among the different generations worshipping together during the Sunday morning worship service. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study. I am hoping to learn the differences that impede mutual respect for each group and discover common practices conducive to a positive worship experience.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and a worship leader / minister of music / or pastor at your local church OR a member or ministry leader at New Calvary Baptist Church. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take a survey. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. To participate, complete the enclosed survey and return it to me in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope.

A consent document is also enclosed with this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because the survey is anonymous, you do not need to sign it nor return to me.

Sincerely,

Willie S. Moody  
Minister of Music  
New Calvary Baptist Church, Norfolk

## Appendix G: Email Template

Hello Robert Jones:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry in Worship. The purpose of my research is to learn why there is division among the different generations worshipping together during the Sunday morning worship service. I am emailing you to invite you to participate in my study. I am hoping to learn the differences that impede mutual respect for each group and discover common practices conducive to a positive worship experience.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and a worship leader / minister of music / or pastor at your local church OR a member or ministry leader at New Calvary Baptist Church. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take a survey. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. To participate, complete the attached survey and return it to me via email at [willie.moody@newcalvarybaptistchurch.com](mailto:willie.moody@newcalvarybaptistchurch.com). To allow for anonymity, I will print your completed survey, place it in a common stack with other surveys, and delete your email.

A consent document is also attached. The document contains additional information about my research. Because the survey is anonymous, you do not need to sign it nor return to me.

Sincerely,

Willie S. Moody  
Minister of Music  
New Calvary Baptist Church, Norfolk

## Appendix H: Recruitment Phone Script

Hello, may I speak with Robert Jones:

Hi Robert. This is Willie Moody. As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry in Worship. The purpose of my research is to learn why there is division among the different generations worshipping together during the Sunday morning worship service. I am calling you to invite you to participate in my study. I am hoping to learn the differences that impede mutual respect for each group and discover common practices conducive to a positive worship experience.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and a worship leader / minister of music / or pastor at your local church OR a member or ministry leader at New Calvary Baptist Church. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take a survey. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Would you be interested in participating?

*[If no continue as follows]* Thank you for taking my call. If you do change your mind and would like to participate in the survey, you may call me at 757-555-1212. Please do have a good day (or good night).

*[If yes continue as follows]* I can either mail you the survey or email you the survey. Which would you prefer?

*[Responds prefer mail]* What is your mailing address so that I can mail the survey to you?  
*[Provides mailing address]* You should receive it within a few days. I will call you [or text you] next week *[provide specific day]* to verify you received it.

OR

*[Responds prefer email]* What is your email address so that I can email you the survey?  
*[Provides email address]*

I will also include a consent document. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because the survey is anonymous, you do not need to sign it nor return to me.

Thank you for speaking with me and agreeing to participate in my research study. Do you have any questions? *[If yes, answer all questions.]* Have a good day (or good evening).

### Appendix I: Recruitment Text or Facebook Messaging Script Template

Hi Robert. I'm a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry in Worship. I would like for you to participate in a survey to help me with my research to learn why there is division among the different generations worshipping together during the Sunday morning worship service and what can be done to bridge the generational gap. May I call you to discuss this further? If so, what would be a good time to call? Thanks, Willie Moody

## Appendix J: Consent Form

**CONSENT FORM**

Worship and the Generational Divide: A Study of Inclusive Worship in the Church  
Willie S. Moody  
Liberty University  
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on multigenerational worship. This study will involve learning why there is division among the different generations worshipping together during the Sunday morning worship service. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 or older and a worship leader / minister of music / or pastor at your local church, OR you are a member or ministry leader at New Calvary Baptist Church. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Willie Moody, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to understand why there is division among the different generations worshipping together and to determine what can be done to bridge the generation gap. I am hoping to learn the differences that impede mutual appreciation for each group and discover common values conducive to a positive worship experience. This research is needed because the number of people living into their 80s and 90s is increasing, and we now have up to five generations of Christians worshipping together in one service in some churches. Each generation has its own set of life experiences that influence their worship style preferences. Worship planners need to have a clear understanding of each generation in order to plan worship services that are biblically and theologically grounded and engage the whole congregation.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, please complete a survey about worship at your local church. The survey should only take about 15 minutes to complete.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, the larger societal benefit is a deeper understanding of each generation and cultivating a better way of interacting for Christians and non-Christians of all ages in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** Because the survey is anonymous, no personal identifying information will be collected. Survey data will be stored on a password locked computer and in a locked desk drawer. Only the researcher will have access to the records. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. I may share the survey data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers. It may be used in future presentations.



**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, simply do not submit your study materials.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Willie Moody. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at [redacted] or [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Doug Crawley, at [redacted].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [redacted].

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.